



Opgetekend. Materiële representatie aan het Haagse hof 1345-1425
A.J. van Egmond

Opgetekend. *Material Representation at the Hague Court 1345-1425*

Between 1345-1425, the Bavarian counts of Holland, Zeeland and Hainaut resided regularly and for extended periods of time at the Binnenhof in The Hague. The counts maintained a middle-sized court, allowing for a wide range of valuables. In the Middle Ages, it was necessary for every prince to consolidate his position through material representation. The counts of Holland were no exception. Previous scholarship has centred on the cultural endeavours of these princes of the Bavarian dynasty, with aspects of material representation touched upon only briefly. Focusing on this aspect of culture, the present art historical study aims to examine the totality of luxury objects and images employed to create the image of a competent prince as conveyed to his peers and subjects. These can be signs identifying the count as a prince, i.e. as one of the ruling class; depictions representing comital status and ambition; and objects adorning the count's personal figure and his surroundings.

Few remnants of this material representation have survived over the centuries. Significant insight into the kinds of objects acquired on the comital family's behalf, however, can be obtained from a series of historical financial records that has largely been preserved intact. The Bavarian counts' administration in The Hague, compiled by various officials, comprises more than 150 accounts ranging in size from several sheets to 200 folia. For the first time, these Holland accounts have been perused in a complete and systematic manner in an effort to unearth payments that might shed light on when, where, by, from and for whom these objects and images were made and acquired. Due to the fact that the counts also resided in Hainaut and had a representative govern the duchy of Bavaria-Straubing, additional series of accounts were recorded and preserved outside The Hague. Payments for objects can therefore also be found in these documents. Following an inquiry into their characteristics and interdependence, I chose to concentrate my research mainly on the Hague court, with the Middle Dutch material forming the primary corpus. Nevertheless, the existence and relevance of the other financial records are duly noted.

Using the comital administration, the research question examining the manner in which luxury objects and images were acquired, registered and implemented at the Hague court can only be addressed to the extent that financial transactions linked to these activities were recorded in the accounts. Even so, the present investigation into material representation serves as a supplement to existing cultural-historical studies of court life in The Hague and provides a broader context for art historical case studies of incidental representations associated with the court.

Representation: Visualisation of Authority

The first section of the present study examines various objects bearing portraits of the counts of the Bavarian house. Generally traceable to an existing iconographic tradition, such depictions allow an identification of key motifs implemented to visually communicate the authority of the counts, specifically in terms of their status and ambitions. Chapter 1 addresses the two most monumental forms of this representation: a burial tomb and a series of comital portraits, both originally located in the court chapel. No remnants of these objects have survived to the present day, nor has the chapel been preserved in its medieval form.

Consequently, previous art historical reconstructions were based on account entries; these have been revisited and supplemented with new material. Entries from the period 1386-89 state that the tomb of Albert of Bavaria's first wife, Margaret of Brieg-Liegnitz, was modelled after the tomb of his mother, Margaret of Hainaut; this tomb of kinship, befitting a former empress of the Holy Roman Empire, was situated in Valenciennes and possibly also commissioned by Albert. Entries of a later date confirm that the Hague tomb – like the monument in Hainaut – not only comprised a *gisant* or effigy of the countess, but that it was also adorned with *pleurants*. While the precise identity of these figures can no longer be ascertained, there is no doubt the coats of arms they held were intended to visually convey important relations, commonly ancestors or peers relevant to the count at this time. It also remains unclear whether the *gisant* itself bore any resemblance to the deceased countess. In all likelihood, her identity was communicated via an epitaph accompanying her effigy. Surprisingly, after this time no other members of the comital family turned to the construction of burial monuments in the Hague chapel as a form of material representation intended to depict the Bavarian dynastic lineage.

Depictions of the comital family's distinguished ancestors were present, however, in the form of a series of wooden statues that stood in the chapel. Contemporaneous accounts list only payments for a wooden statue of William V to be placed 'inden capelle inden Haghe'. Subsequently, fifteenth-century accounts confirm the existence of statues portraying William's brother, Albert, and Albert's son and granddaughter, William VI and Jacoba, as well as earlier princes. These latter entries also substantiate these works' probable placement before niche panels in the choir screen. During the celebration of Mass, these figures stood prominently behind the main altar, where they were certain to inspire prayers for the salvation of the depicted counts in the afterlife. Given that this series of statues – depicting all of the previous counts of Holland, each with an inscribed panel including coat of arms – was presumably on view from the time of the choir screen's installation in 1373, it becomes highly tenable that Albert's intention was to legitimise and consolidate his standing with their presence. Albert's rule had arisen as a consequence of a dynastic shift via the female line, following William IV's death without an heir, and his brother being unfit to govern due to illness. As such, his position was disputed by various rivals in its early years. Albert's move to expand his court by designating the court chapel as a collegiate church at the end of the 1360s seems to reflect the fact that his authority had achieved stability, with his position no longer in question. Without doubt, the series must be viewed in this context. These wooden figures of counts functioned as a visual expression of the genealogies of the counts of Hollands as recorded in the chronicles, as such confirming the custom of defining the history of Holland in terms of princely biographies in the order of their accession. In the fifteenth century – again following a dynastic shift – the Burgundian dukes also added an image of their own to communicate their new role as the counts of Holland.

Discussed in Chapter 2 are counts' portraits preserved on seals and coins. Every ruler issued sealed charters and ordered the minting of coins, by means of which specific portraits were widely disseminated. For each of the Bavarian princes, several examples survive to this day; a selection of these items is examined here. Seals can generally be dated on the basis of the sealed charters for which they were used and accordingly linked to a given political situation. A seal's primary function was not so much to identify the person in question but

rather to communicate his rank. Albert issued two different seals: one for the duchy of Bavaria-Straubing and one for the counties of Holland, Zeeland and Hainaut. The legend of his early, Bavarian seal makes no mention of him governing the counties. The seal's emblem, however, shows him with a banner bearing the quartered coat of arms of Bavaria-Holland/Hainaut. By its design, the seal served to convey the prince's claim to these counties: a message intended for related rivals. From this, it may be deduced that the seal's depiction held iconographic significance. A number of account entries confirm that comital seals were re-cut with each shift in status. This occurred, for example, when Albert officially assumed the title of count upon the death of his brother, William V; with the bestowal of knighthood on Albert's son, William, his subsequent appointment as governor of Hainaut and his later accession as count; and when William's brother, John, though presenting himself as count in his effort to replace his niece Jacoba, was obliged to use the title of *filius*.

Through coin ordinances, coins can also be precisely dated; further inquiries show that they too had iconographic relevance. Account records indicate that specific coins bearing portraits were given as gifts. This applies, for example, to the 'Willemgulden' (William's guilder), which Albert – as William's substitute – minted and distributed in his brother's name. Coins were also used to express feudal relationships. William V himself, for example, was indebted to his father, Louis the Bavarian, who in his function as the Holy Roman Emperor transferred the counties to his wife, William's mother. In 1354, William minted a 'gouden schild' (originating from the *écu d'or*) bearing a depiction of the emperor, thus expressing his feudal relation to his overlord. The emperor portrayed, however, was not his own father but in fact the next emperor, Charles IV, whom William needed to confirm his fiefdoms, as did other princes holding similar feudal ties to the emperor. Governing as his father's rightful heir, it was William VI (initially referred to by his French fiefdom as 'van Oostervant') who introduced the motif of the garden, since 1387 handed out in the form of neck chains, on his seals and coins. Less motivated by a desire to legitimise his authority, this symbol was meant to visualise his policy, with the garden symbolising his duty to protect the unity of the three counties while maintaining consensus among all those residing there. The combined use of this sign, an additional iconography referred to as 'onrusten', and perhaps also the motto of William VI, should be understood in the context of significant unrest in the counties. This continuous upheaval was caused by several major conflicts: disputes in the early 1390s among the nobles of Holland and Zeeland, who were actively engaged in forming political factions, an episode of what is commonly known as the 'Hook and Cod Wars'; a war waged against the Frisians in subsequent years, designed to restore comital authority in this northern region, while concentrating internal hostilities on a common external adversary; and after 1400, the war against John, Lord of Arkel, whose rising independence had become a threat to William's authority. Contrary to what has previously been asserted, the 'order of the garden' is not to be confused with a knightly order. Instead, it must be seen as a network centred on the prince, who distributed marks of distinction and visual propaganda specifically created for this purpose. Recognising the striving for unity as a virtue, Jacoba and John of Bavaria likewise resorted to the garden motif. By turning against each other, however, they sowed only discord.

Chapter 3 shows that the function of comital portraits on paper and parchment was far less evident, making these figures more difficult to identify. Names and/or coats of arms are

mostly absent in these portraits. Despite attempts made in the existing literature, few can be identified with certainty. Appearing in an encyclopaedic manuscript entitled *Tafel vanden kersten ghelove* and a Latin book of hours are in all probability Albert and his second wife, Margaret of Cleves, respectively. Albert's figure, however, is accompanied by a heraldic ensemble that includes a crest documented nowhere else. Nobles are known to have used different symbols as crests. Confirming this specific crest was actually one of Albert's proves an elusive task, however, as few contemporaneous registrations of his complete ensemble exist. Moreover, the ensemble in this manuscript could have been added to the illumination by one of his sons. Margaret is referred to at the back of the manuscript in a later inscription, but not in any definitive sense. The names and coats of arms were likely absent in the books when Albert and Margaret owned them, probably because they were primarily intended for personal use. Those portrayed in a fragmentary drawing of a richly attired courtly company can solely be identified as members of the Hague court by the device of the order of St. Anthony worn by a number of the male figures. This order was thought to have been founded by the counts of Holland, with several of the drawing's figures consequently interpreted as possible historic portrayals. While the counts' founding role cannot be proved, there exists little doubt concerning their involvement. Nevertheless, the method used to make these identifications – comparing these images to non-contemporaneous portraits – constitutes an imprecise approach. Technical analysis has shown that inscriptions or coats of arms were never present, supporting the notion that the original drawing was only viewed in small circles. In those cases where the depicted individual's identity was deemed relevant, whether for religious or political purposes, a portrait was furnished with a name and coat of arms. A fine example is a 'schimpbrief' (a reviling letter of complaint), featuring a defaming portrait of John of Bavaria, composed by an aggrieved German nobleman who subsequently distributed this image in large numbers in the hope of damaging the prince's reputation. This negative depiction stands in stark contrast to that found in the so-called 'kustminiatuur', which shows a prince praying for the welfare of his subjects on a Dutch coastline. Given that this image was probably painted by Jan van Eyck, it seems apparent that John of Bavaria is the figure portrayed. However, his name is not inscribed and the standard bearing the Bavarian-Holland/Hainaut coat of arms, though likely evident for his contemporaries, is in retrospect subject to multiple interpretations.

Not one of the iconographies discussed in these three chapters can be described as innovative – certainly not when it comes to the traditional implementation of coats of arms. The manner in which they have been employed by the counts of the Bavarian house nevertheless offers some insight into the depiction of status and ambition by various members of the same dynasty. No payments were unearthed in the accounts for depictions preserved on parchment or paper. Judging by the sum total of representations commissioned, however, it appears the counts indeed chose to convey their authority by visual means, generally preferring coats of arms to portraits of themselves. What emerges when perusing all payments registered is that the objects bearing depictions made up only a small percentage of this material representation when compared to the overall number of luxury objects.

Inventorisation: Object in Context

In the second section, the comital accounts are critically examined, determining in what ways they can be used as sources for art historical research. In Chapter 4, it is shown that the bookkeeping methods applied in the respective territories of Holland and Zeeland, Hainaut and Bavaria-Straubing were at no point restructured in accordance with the formation of this personal union. Court expenditures occurring in Holland were first systematically entered in an itemised manner in the accounts compiled by the treasurer starting in 1371. One rubric was solely intended for objects and luxury fabrics (*Juwelen en guldenlaken*). These most central records have remained largely intact. For the period up to 1389, totals of revenues garnered and individual expenses incurred in Hainaut were also entered in the financial administration of Holland. In this period, it appears the registration in Holland was given priority over that of Hainaut. Here separate accounts were kept for the costs of maintaining the court, i.e. the *comptes de l'hôtel*, of which many have been lost. These chiefly comprised summarised references to individual receipts, of which but a few remain, scattered among various archives. Only during the period that William of Oostervant served as governor in Hainaut were the French accounts compiled in specified payments by a clerk from Holland in the manner he was accustomed. The few surviving Bavarian accounts – encompassing no more than two successive periods of three years – clearly illustrate the difference between the expenses of a court *with* versus a court *without* a prince: only those entered for Albert Junior, who oversaw the duchy as its governor, contain relevant entries concerning luxury objects. Unlike those in Holland, these accounts contain no rubric specifically established for objects. The fact that payments for objects are specified in the administration of Holland by no means suggests that the information provided is anything more than summary. Generally, descriptions of objects are entirely lacking: in the recording of these transactions, it was the payment – not the object – that had priority in ensuring a purchase could be recalled and approved some time later. In many cases, these payments are specified by including only one or maybe two properties: e.g. the name of the seller, the intended receiver, the place from which an object or artisan originated, or the occasion that had required the purchase. Nevertheless, an analysis of the specific characteristics of these Holland accounts establishes that, of the three account series, the Holland accounts provide the greatest insight when researching material representation realised for the Bavarian counts, thus legitimising the decision to focus on this material.

In Chapter 5, the Holland accounts are compared to the few surviving inventories associated with the Hague court. Most of these lists date from after 1425, when the transferral of goods to the Burgundian duke and his governing from abroad necessitated the registration of objects in his absence. It proved impossible to link objects cited in the comital accounts to those listed in the inventories, in part because the descriptions in these inventories only include object qualities, traits that were not registered in the accounts. After all, by the time the inventory was compiled the circumstances of an object's acquisition had long been forgotten, and visual appearance was used to distinguish between different objects. In the absence of contemporaneous estate inventories for the Binnenhof, the accounts were approached, as it were, as inventory listings of the counts' furnishings in order to establish the location and nature of the objects present. It subsequently became clear that a distinction was to be made between public spaces and (semi-)private chambers, and in the same line, objects

for general use versus those specifically intended for the count and countess. The furnishing of the council chamber and chapel was fairly consistent; the grand hall, by contrast, appears to have been furnished differently for each individual occasion. Estate inventories concerning residences in Paris and Bergen (Hainaut), as well as those of the Burgundian Binnenhof, reflect in turn the situation following the counts residing there. As expenditures for the court chapel were registered in the steward's accounts in a separate rubric, the expectation was that these could readily be linked to items listed in two fifteenth-century inventories. As noted above, however, the entries in the accounts are too non-specific and therefore preclude conclusions on, for instance, the duration of an object's usefulness. Several French inventories offer some insight into the personal possessions of William VI, Jacoba of Bavaria and Margaret of Burgundy, primarily consisting of clothing and precious metal objects. Noteworthy is that not one of these inventories lists a value for the objects. They were compiled to ensure the completeness of the princely possessions (possibly in light of their transfer from one location to the other), not to be used as a tool for assessing the worth of those possessions. Only in the case of the executors' account concerning Jacoba's will – previously also approached as an 'inventory' – were values assigned to specific objects, i.e. those items to be sold in settling Jacoba's debt. Annotations with respect to an object's condition are found only in the aforementioned Binnenhof inventory, compiled at a time when the court no longer served as a residence and various items had long been unmaintained. As one might expect, objects were also given away in an effort to strengthen ties at court and between the court and its various relations. At the Hague court, no lists were made of incoming or outgoing gifts: to examine such practices, here too the accounts were consulted as inventory. Objects received were only registered in those instances when the delivering courier was remunerated for his services with a tip. These gifts were by no means limited to objects: foodstuffs, animals and textiles were also exchanged, with all donations made according to one's financial wherewithal. Recorded in the accounts as a purchase generally preceded the count's beneficence, objects given away essentially fell into two categories: votive and diplomatic gifts. The emphasis lays on the latter, with the chains of the garden being a good example, but even more so the courtly custom of exchanging gifts around the onset of the new year. Despite the financial motive that underlies the comital, concise accounts, the methodology of approaching these documents as inventories proves fruitful.

Comparisons are made between objects with and without figurative decoration in Chapter 6. By examining the terminology and the layout of the accounts in relation to the number of objects acquired from 1371 on, insight can be obtained with respect to preferences for specific objects at the Hague court. First addressed are goldsmith's works, as recorded in the accounts under *Juwelen ende guldenlaken*. These included both individual pieces aimed to impress, such as a gilt table piece in the form of a tree, and more modest items produced in large quantities, such as stacks of silver platters presented in sideboards (so-called 'credence tables'). Goblets and brooches appear numerous times and were the objects most frequently given away. The number of embedded pearls and gemstones, and the object's weight, were consistently recorded in the account entries. The notion that precious metal objects were solely considered as exchangeable for silver and gold coins, however, proves unfounded. The processing was absolutely relevant: when recorded, the production costs amounted to approximately thirty per cent of the total spent. The majority of these precious metal items

concerned utilitarian objects, i.e. silver dinnerware and jewellery, both ornamented and unornamented. There were also objects that served the primary function of conveying a visual depiction. Recording these objects in the accounts, reference is either made to the name of the sort with no additional information regarding the nature of the depiction, or the iconography is listed without specifying the kind of object. Whether an entry concerns precious metal objects, tapestries or embroideries, wooden figures or paintings can typically be determined by identifying the rubric and/or the maker. For instance, the term ‘schilderije’ referred not to a specific object (being the later term for a painted panel) but to the nature of what was to be depicted, in this case, escutcheons (‘schild’ in Dutch), regardless of the medium used. These escutcheons could be forged, embroidered or painted. After 1400, the rubric *Harnasch ende schilderije* appears a total of nine times in the accounts to register such items. As with all images, the material employed depended upon the circumstances and the intended use of the depiction. During the unrest occurring after 1390, for example, painted coats of arms on panel or fabric appeared more frequently instead of the embroidered escutcheons, which in times of stability represented wealth and position. The incoherently defined terminology used in these accounts strongly suggests the autonomous image was not yet integrated in the representational tradition of the court at this time.

Based on these three chapters, the most thorough investigation of the accounts as sources of art historical data can best be described as an approach threefold in nature: an analysis of the bookkeeping method and layout applied in the accounts; an inventory of the information provided by the totality of relevant account entries; and a detailed examination of the phrasing and word choice in specific account entries.

Organisation: Working on Behalf of the Court

The third section centres on those individuals involved in the procuring and realisation of material representation. For those whose names appear more frequently in the accounts, information can be obtained regarding their (sometimes merely inferred) role and (albeit incidentally noted) circumstances. First to be addressed, in Chapter 7, are the mediating members of the court. The court was an organisation, which in terms of the delegation of various functions, was arranged according to rank: nobles, as masters, fulfilled ceremonial tasks, while *garsoenen* carried out the actual work, assisted by their subordinates. Status was denoted by the annually received livery, which varied in both colour and quality according to one’s station; no one was yet attired in the prince’s colours at this time. The prince endeavoured to limit the costs of what was commonly a rapidly expanding *herberg*, even when an extensive court served to enhance his representation. Court members worked without remuneration; in addition to the livery, they were provided board and lodging, along with other possible benefits arising from an individual’s own specified task. Two related ordinance texts from 1354 convey who was to receive what amount and include a list enumerating function titles. The accounts indicate that many of these functionaries played an incidental role in the acquisition of luxury objects. By contrast, the involvement of the chamberlains, ladies in waiting, clerks, and the treasurer was more structural in nature. Especially noteworthy are aspects of the respective roles of the latter two functionaries, to be deduced only from the passive word phrasing in which the act of reimbursing other mediators was registered. Both the handing out of compensation for amounts spent in advance and the

receipt of an invoice stating what amount was owed for the purchase of which object are indicated in minimal wording. In addition to his other responsibilities, the treasurer also kept his own collection of precious metal objects, which could then be sold to the comital administration when the necessity arose. With this arrangement explicitly stated only once in the accounts, in the other entries one gets the impression these objects simply appeared out of nowhere. Undoubtedly, the treasurer functioned as a key figure in the counts' consumption. As far as recorded in the accounts, the count and countess's involvement in such matters was limited. Only in a few instances did they personally engage in the acquisition or commissioning of objects. In most cases, it appears the courtiers did the purchasing, often acting without specific orders to do so. Except for the treasurer's central role, or maybe even because of it, a specific organisational structure was never required to meet the need for material representation, this being perhaps an advantage of the court's middle-size scale.

The first half of Chapter 8 focuses on the merchants involved. The yearly acquisition of livery fabrics in the Southern Netherlandish textile cities and the subsequent transporting of these materials to the courts in Holland and Hainaut were typically overseen by a member of the court in the accompaniment of merchants. Purchasing amounts and expenses for logistical matters were therefore included in the accounts. These entries provide insight into the conditions merchants commonly faced. Besides fabrics for the entire court, luxury fabrics – mainly from the Mediterranean region and the East – and furs – primarily from the north and north-east – were purchased for members of the comital family. In addition to cities in the Southern Netherlands, the same luxury goods were traded, for instance, in the episcopal city of Utrecht. Those involved in the sale of objects were of varying calibres, ranging from merchants specialised in precious metal objects and/or primarily in coins, to travelling pedlars who visited the court bearing all kinds of wares. It was this latter group who offered small painted panels, prayer beads and mirrors. During the period in question, the court moved from Holland to Hainaut and vice versa via Flanders and Brabant, the most developed trade region of Western Europe. This ensured its members were continuously in contact with both local and regional merchants and therefore always up to date on the latest market trends.

The second half of Chapter 8 focuses on the artisans involved. The court was equipped with a sewing workshop of its own, called a *taelgerije*, responsible for the raiment of the count and countess, as well as members of the court and the court itself. For the furnishing of a set of coverings (a 'kamer') in the 1370s, comprising of coordinated hangings, carpets and tapestries, the workshop's master was personally responsible for organising collaborations between various external embroiderers, primarily in Brussels. In subsequent decades, this organisation was assigned to one of these same embroiderers, thus outsourcing a major task and bringing an end to separate payments for each individual involved, as previously entered in the accounts. Also evident is that individual embroiderers employed at this time were prone to focus more on the needs of one particular member of the comital family rather than the overall running the workshop. In contrast, for most of the period in question, goldsmiths were not employed on a contractual basis: precisely for this reason, the accounts contain a large number of entries that concern self-employed workers satisfying the court's demand for precious metal objects on a collective basis. Both in the larger cities of Holland as well as in The Hague, various goldsmiths owned or set up workshops, both to carry out repairs on the count's behalf and to forge new objects. Several of them perhaps were also involved in the

sale of objects: not all transactions entered in the accounts mention the production process. For the production of the aforementioned tomb in the court chapel, a Bavarian sculptor was enlisted – possibly because no one at court possessed this kind of expertise – who then selected and hired Brabantine sculptors. While the actual contract for the commission has not been preserved, it must have been comparable to that of a Hainaut sculptor instructed in the same period to build an altarpiece for the St Bavokerk in Haarlem. The said sculptor was hired by the city's master builder, who later gained employment at the Binnenhof. A copy of the charter stating his contractual hiring has been preserved clearly outlining the conditions of employment. Such conditions are likely to have been the same for other hired artisans. A few image makers ('beeldenmakers') named in the accounts are likewise known from other sources. One of these can actually be linked to surviving paintwork of later date: Jan van Eyck. He was paid a regularly recurring amount (pandgeld), thus confirming his unique position. Nevertheless, payments for specific activities appear nowhere in the accounts and nothing is known about the nature of Van Eyck's painting on behalf of the Hague court. A permanent working contract implies that the individual in question was not to be remunerated for each individual piece, with his activities therefore not recorded into the accounts. Accordingly, the fact that so few artisans were hired at the Hague court on the basis of a permanent contract can be considered an advantage when seeking information about individual artisans during the period in question. Because the court maintained both short- and long-term contacts with at least as many merchants as artisans – originating from close to home and far away – every conceivable luxury object was well within the count and countess's reach.

Chapter 9 discusses the figures who made this study possible: the clerks who entered the payments for luxury objects in the accounts. The information drawn from the entries is combined with an examination of the accounts as material objects, i.e. the books physically handled in the comital chancery. From this, one may conclude that – in the early decades of the court under Bavarian rule – after having closed out the account period (reconciliation), the treasurer ordered that two copies be made of the financial administration as initially entered into a draft book of original entry. The auditing procedure entailed the formal presentation of the account in triplicate: the original draft and two neat versions. Two of these copies were archived by the chancery, most of which have been preserved; the third copy was likely placed in the personal archive of the responsible official and thereafter consequently lost. In those copies that have been preserved, drawings frequently adorn the pages, most likely added by the clerks themselves. While exceptional, these accounts remained above all administrative documents. Of the accounts drawn up after 1390, only one copy survives. For the actual audit, only the two presentation copies were used, with one subsequently archived and the other lost in the official's possession. By this time, the draft version was no longer being submitted, probably because it was deemed unsuitable as a formal document. With the surviving single copies, one observes the writing, page layout and decorations are more refined. After 1400, several entries in the treasurer's accounts convey this enhanced attention to detail. Besides payments for expenditures arising from the compilation of the draft administration by the account clerks, payments for the production of the two presentation copies are recorded: this consisted of the acquisition and preparation of the parchment sheets and the transcribing of the entries, sometimes carried out by external clerks. In two successive years, the accounts

even list payments to an external illuminator, charged with decorating the most important initials in the accounts. This ensured the prince and nobles attending the audit were presented with both accurate and aesthetically appealing documents. The audit itself essentially consisted of the confirmation or termination of the relationship between the prince and the official, in the presence of his most relevant nobles and clerks. With the treasurer's rise in prestige, this ceremony assumed increasing importance. Accordingly, it was in the treasurer's best interest that the account books be prepared in optimal fashion – complete, accurate and decorated – with his professionalism serving to solidify his key position. By no means was it common practice for administrative documents to be decorated in such a manner. For this reason, these comital account books can also be viewed as objects of material representation.

In essence, the Holland accounts reveal the nature of comital consumption at the Hague court. As demonstrated in the final three chapters, the situation differed from a centre of artistic patronage in the traditional sense, i.e. a place where count and countess commissioned the making of objects, achieved through the mediation of specific members of the court and artisans hired on a permanent basis. Instead, the Hague court was a place where objects were acquired on the counts' behalf, mainly by various members of the court – often without any specific instruction – from merchants and artisans of all types. Any visitor to the Binnenhof is certain to have encountered luxury objects and images; nevertheless, in discussions of the Bavarian court at the Hague, the term 'court art' simply does not apply. While conducting this research, seldom could a name appearing in the accounts be linked to an object surviving today. By contrast, inquiries into the realisation of the comital administration highlighted a direct, observable connection between the preserved account books and the chancery clerks. The picture that emerges from the Hague accounts is one in which the comital clerks were fully conscious of the esteem accorded an account that was neatly ordered, transcribed and decorated. The clerks' appreciation for the external appearance of the account books reflects the general care given to material representation, evident in the content of the entries. Members of the Hague court acknowledged the potency of material representation and consequently ensured the count's need to project the image of a competent prince was met through luxury objects and visual depictions. The present study is the first to provide an all-encompassing picture of this material representation, as recorded in the accounts of Holland.