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Abraham Willaerts: Marine painter of Dutch Brazil and the Atlantic world

In June 2016 a London art dealer offered an oil painting supposedly representing a view of a Dutch ship before the coast at the Downs to Het Scheepvaartmuseum in Amsterdam (fig. 1a). The painting, a modest composition (45.5 x 63.2 cm) in a black wooden frame, came from a collection in South Africa ten years earlier, but little was known about its provenance. The oak panel was broken along the entire length of the painting, and restored by a previous owner. The varnish showed systematic patterns of deterioration, possibly as a result of careless packaging before shipping in recent years. Based on the monogram A.W. and the date 1640 (on the stern of the ship at either side of the rudder), it was attributed to Adam Willaerts (ca. 1577-1664), and said to have been made as an homage to Admiral Maerten Harpertsz. Tromp, who had defeated a major Spanish armada at the Downs in 1638. Diederick Wildeman, curator of Het Scheepvaartmuseum, recognized the townscape



1a
Abraham Willaerts, *View of Recife*, 1640, oil on panel, 45.5 x 63.2 cm, Amsterdam, Het Scheepvaartmuseum, inv. 2017.1929-1.

in the background as Recife, in northeast Brazil. Based on its identification as a unique maritime representation of Dutch Brazil, the museum decided to acquire the *View of Recife* in late 2017. It was put on public display for the first time in May 2019.

This article aims to offer a contextual analysis of the painting, embedded in the historiography on marine painting in the Dutch Golden Age in general, and the flourishing court culture of Count Johan Maurits of Nassau-Siegen (1604-1679) in Recife around 1640 specifically.[1] It identifies the painting as the work of Adam Willaerts' second son, the Utrecht artist Abraham Willaerts (ca. 1613-1669), and includes biographical information to argue that he, alongside Albert Eckhout (ca. 1610-ca. 1666) and Frans Post (1612-1680), was the third professional painter in Johan Maurits' retinue. Additionally, it provides answers to questions surrounding another painting attributed to Abraham Willaerts, which has been interpreted in various ways, but must now very likely be understood as the Dutch invasion of Angola in 1641. Together, the two paintings offer new insights into an expanding narrative of the global dimensions of Dutch seventeenth-century art, and emphasize the public dimension of the only imperial moment in Dutch Atlantic history.[2]

I will first introduce the *View of Recife* in detail, before providing the available sources for identifying Abraham Willaerts as the designated marine painter in Johan Maurits' Brazilian entourage.

View of Recife

Even for specialists of Dutch marine painting, the works of Adam and Abraham Willaerts have been notoriously difficult to distinguish, and the initially erroneous attribution to Adam is easy to understand. Both father and son used the monogram A.W. (and occasionally, their full signatures), and some works can probably best be attributed to the Willaerts workshop, without clearly distinguishing different hands. Attributions are further complicated by the fact that Adam's other two sons – Cornelis (ca. 1611-1666) and Isaac (1620-1693) – were also reputable artists. Adam Willaerts' paintings still command higher prices in today's art market than the ones made by his sons, and this occasionally impacts attributions too.[3] The discovery of the *View of Recife* (fig. 1a), however, provides sufficient reason to study Abraham Willaerts as a marine painter in his own right.[4] From the surviving works which have been signed, it is clear that he cannot be ranked at the same level as leading marine painters such as Hendrik Vroom (ca. 1562-1640) or Willem van de Velde I (ca. 1611-1693) and Willem van de Velde II (1633-1707), who many believe represented the genre's pinnacle around 1670. Abraham's oeuvre, however, is rather eclectic, consisting of Biblical themes and portraits alongside marine paintings, which reached their first commercial peak in the 1640s.[5]

That the oak panel must be ascribed to Abraham Willaerts, as well as that it represents a view of the port of Recife, is more than likely. Its perspective is very similar to the upper section of a news map made by the Amsterdam print publisher Claes Jansz. Visscher (ca. 1587-1652) ten years before, on the occasion of the Dutch West India Company's successful conquest of Olinda and Recife in February 1630 (fig. 2). Visscher's printed collage was a popular item, often framed for interior decoration in urban households, as we know from genre paintings by Willaerts' Utrecht colleague Jacob Duck (ca. 1600-1667) (fig. 3).[6] The *View of Recife*, at first glance, resembles the Visscher design very closely. Both images include the wharf on the far left, the port town's many warehouses where sugar was stored before it was being shipped to Europe, and the Corpus Christi Church which the Dutch had converted into the main Dutch Reformed Church in Brazil. Yet Recife had become a different town by 1640. Although the skyline had not significantly changed during the first decade of Dutch rule – Johan Maurits's monumental Vrijburg Palace with its two characteristic towers was not constructed until 1642 – the townscape gives two clues to the originality of Willaerts' design.

Immediately after establishing their regime, with in mind the failure to keep hold of the city of Salvador occupied in 1624-25, the West India Company (WIC) reinforced

2
Claes Jansz Visscher, *The conquest of Olinda and Recife*, detail, 1630, print, 84.4 x 102.7 cm, Amsterdam, Het Scheepvaartmuseum, inv. A.0145 (130).



existing Portuguese fortifications and constructed several new ones.[7] The painting shows clearly four of these fortresses. The two towers on the right side of the Dutch ship in the foreground are from the 'Zeekasteel' (Forte do Mar) and 'Landkasteel' (São Jorge); the former is surrounded by water on almost all four sides, the latter (in the background) is located on the narrow sandy reef which connected Recife to Olinda. Both defensive structures were originally built by the Portuguese several decades before the arrival of the Dutch. To the right (north) of the 'Landkasteel' are two other fortifications. Closest to the 'Landkasteel' is Fort de Bruyn, another Portuguese redoubt which was heavily repaired and strengthened by the Dutch. On Visscher's print, the structure (indiscriminately labelled as 'Baterye') is significantly smaller than on Willaerts' painting of ten years later, reflecting

3
Jacob Duck, *Bordello scene*, ca. 1635, oil on panel, 41.3 x 54 cm, New York, Christie's, 28-1-2009.



the improvements the WIC engineers Thomas Commersteyn and Pieter van Bueren made to the fortress in 1630 and 1631.[8] On the right of the painting, a fourth fortification can be identified, the small redoubt named 'Juffrouw de Bruyn' from 1630. This structure did not yet exist during the Dutch conquest, and is therefore missing on Visscher's news map. Since no further views of Recife from the sea are known (despite an abundance of Brazilian illustrations and maps from the 1630s), it is likely that Willaerts ignored Visscher's design, and depicted the townscape after his own observations.

Willaerts' painting can be seen as a combination of a coastal scene and a ship's portrait.[9] The vessel, sailing for the WIC's Amsterdam chamber – as the city flag flying from the mizzenmast attests – is mounted with 22 guns, one of which fires a salute as the ship approaches the port. Ships of this size could carry around 80 to 100 people, perhaps a little more at times of war. The small crew were usually joined by soldiers and ordinary passengers, who in these years populated the colony in increasing numbers.[10] In January 1640, the Dutch had narrowly won what turned out to be the final naval battle near Pernambuco against the Habsburg fleet.[11] The depiction of the ship's safe arrival might well have reflected the mood in Recife at the time Willaerts conceived the painting.

I have not been able to identify the ship beyond doubt. The image adorning the ship's transom appears to be a full-length portrait of a stadtholder, judging from the positioning and the military attire of the figure on the counter (fig. 1b). In 1640, the Amsterdam chamber had a vessel called the *Prins Hendrick* (Prince Frederick Henry of Orange-Nassau), which was constructed or purchased by the local Admiralty in 1639. According to information from several years later, this ship could carry 100 men and 30 guns.[12] The *Prins Hendrick* was part of Admiral Jan Lichthart's major fleet which departed from the Dutch Republic for Brazil in January 1640 and arrived in Recife in March.[13] That these portraits of (identifiable) ships near a coast circulated, can be confirmed by an inventory of a retired ship's captain in Amsterdam, who in 1659 owned "1 piece of the ship Alckmaer and the lantcasteel of Recife nicely drawn with a black ebony frame". The *Alckmaer* was a vessel the painting's owner had captained to Brazil himself.[14] The description conveniently matches the *View of Recife* by Willaerts, and it is not inconceivable that Willaerts or the family studio created multiple paintings for captains or crew members who had sailed to Dutch Brazil.[15]

The ship itself, sailing upright in a light eastern breeze, became a staple item in the Willaerts workshop.[16] We encounter an almost identical ship in a painting with the monogram A.W.F. and dated 164(3), that came up for auction in London in 1999.[17] Although the painting



1b
Abraham Willaerts, *View of Recife*, detail, 1640, oil on panel, 45.5 x 63.2 cm, Amsterdam, Het Scheepvaartmuseum, inv. 2017.1929-1.

is more sketchy in nature, with firmer lines than Willaerts' *View of Recife*, the ship on the left-hand side must have been painted after the same study for the 1640 composition. The fact that in both paintings, the viewer is able to see the contours of the coastline through the foresail may well have served as added value in a crowded market for marine paintings. Sober compositions like *View of Recife*, then, may have provided a baseline for more dynamic marine paintings made by the Willaerts studio from 1640 onward.

A few further details in Willaerts' *View of Recife* can be identified, most importantly the boat with fifteen men in the bottom right. One member of the crew is standing up, with his hat in his hand, waving to the ship as a welcome salute. On the right-hand side of the boat, a well-dressed man – probably a representative of the colonial government in Recife – is seated in the company of three standing figures, one of whom appears to be barking orders at the rowers in front of him. In order to distinguish the individual rowers, Willaerts used an idiosyncratic alternating red-and-black coloring scheme of hats and shirts which can be found across his whole oeuvre – and which also appears in the work of his younger brother Isaac. Three small yachts, flying the red, white, and blue of the United Provinces, fill the left and right sides of the painting. The two-master immediately to the right of the main ship is a pleasure yacht ('speeljacht') for well-to-do individuals, which might be an allusion to the anticipated untroubled future for the colony.[18] In the background seven bigger ships are anchored along the reef which gave Recife its name. In the distant background, the lush green hills of Pernambuco rise up, as another element which is missing in Visscher's news map of 1630 (fig. 2). The painting thus combines several key aspects which contemporaries would have recognized as elements of the West India Company's flourishing colony in Brazil.

Court painters of Dutch Brazil: Post, Eckhout, Willaerts

The *View of Recife* sheds new light on an issue that has been the subject of enquiry (and a substantial amount of speculation) for a long time among art historians. It started with the claim Johan Maurits made in 1678, towards the end of his life, as he reflected on his tenure as governor-general of the WIC in Recife decades earlier: "There were six artists at my court in Brazil, each of whom has painted what he was most capable at".[19] Two of the artists in his entourage, Albert Eckhout and Frans Post, are mentioned in every survey of Dutch art of the Golden Age, and both indeed painted what they were most capable at: Eckhout was assigned to making portraits and still-lifes of the local inhabitants and food respectively, while Frans Post painted Brazilian landscapes. Their oeuvres have been the subject of memorable exhibitions and extensive research.[20] Other artists in Recife, and their designated subject matter, however, have so far proved elusive. Scholars have made arguments for several contenders, some more persuasive than others, with the Antwerp brothers Gillis (1612-1653) and Bonaventura Peeters (1614-1652) as the leading candidates. They painted tropical scenes during the heyday of Dutch Brazil, and some of their compositions unquestionably refer to locations and encounters in the South Atlantic. Gillis Peeters' well-known view of Recife from the nearby hills of Olinda is usually dated 1638, but it depicts a view of Recife and Mauritsstad that was realized only after the mid-1640s when Johan Maurits returned to Europe. The presence of the Peeters brothers in Brazil has divided opinions among specialists, and the question whether they made their paintings based on their own visual accounts during a visit to South America, or solely after engravings and maps from Pernambuco in their workshops in the Low Countries, has yet to be cleared up.[21] Some have given up the search for other artists, having settled for the conclusion that the old Count must have referred to draughtsmen and scientists formerly in his service, such as the German naturalist Georg Marcgraf and his compatriot Zacharias Wagner.[22] The discovery of the *View of Recife,* accompanied by a survey of new and previously misinterpreted biographical evidence, however, strongly suggests that the third Dutch painter in northeast Brazil must be identified as Abraham Willaerts.[23]

When Johan Maurits of Nassau-Siegen was appointed governor-general of Dutch Brazil by the WIC in the autumn of 1636, he was the highest European nobleman in history to take charge of a province in the Americas. Born and raised at the courts of Kassel and Siegen, Johan Maurits had distinguished himself as a military commander in the struggle of the young Dutch Republic against Habsburg Spain, for example at the Siege of Schenkenschans in the spring of 1636. The WIC directors were looking for a capable ruler and military commander, but must have known that the nobleman had a great love for arts and science. Like Frederick Henry and his German consort Amalia of Solms, Johan Maurits considered artistic patronage an obvious instrument to further his reputation. He thus followed the tradition of Calvinist courts in the Holy Roman Empire, most notably those of Maurice of Hesse-Kassel (*Moritz der Gelehrte*) at whose court he spent part of his childhood, and Count Palatine Frederick V, who lived in exile in The Hague.[24] Already before his departure for Brazil, Johan Maurits had made designs for a town palace – today the Mauritshuis – immediately adjacent to the seat of federal government in The Hague. It was only as expected that somebody in his position would maintain an entourage of painters and scientists for his new dwellings in Brazil.

The Count left Europe for America in October 1636 accompanied by at least one artist. A sketch book of nineteen drawings by the twenty-four year old Frans Post, made during his transatlantic voyage to Brazil aboard the *Zutphen*, has survived.[25] The precision of his views of Madeira, the Canary Islands, and Cape Verde is similar to that of his later Brazilian drawings for Caspar Barlaeus' *Rerum per octennium*, and explains why Johan Maurits invited him to document the tropical landscape of his sugar colony. Post arrived in Recife in January 1637, where his earliest known painting, *View of Itamaracá*, was made in November of the same year.[26] Even though Post stayed in Pernambuco probably until 1643, only seven paintings can be attributed to the painter's Brazilian years. The other known 148 works were made in his workshop in Haarlem, displaying a gradually increasing affection for Brazil. It has often been assumed that Albert Eckhout, possibly born in Groningen from immigrant (German) parents, traveled to Brazil together with Johan Maurits in 1636 as well, but there is no evidence for this.[27] His earliest dated Brazilian painting is from 1641, and the earliest archival reference to his presence in Recife is from the same year.[28] Eckhout stayed in Brazil certainly until 1643, and resurfaces in the Netherlands only in the autumn of 1644 (by which time Johan Maurits had also returned). Eckhout's later career brought him to Dresden, where he became court painter to Johann Georg I, Elector of Saxony, on the recommendation of his Brazilian patron.

Three sources about Willaerts in the Atlantic world

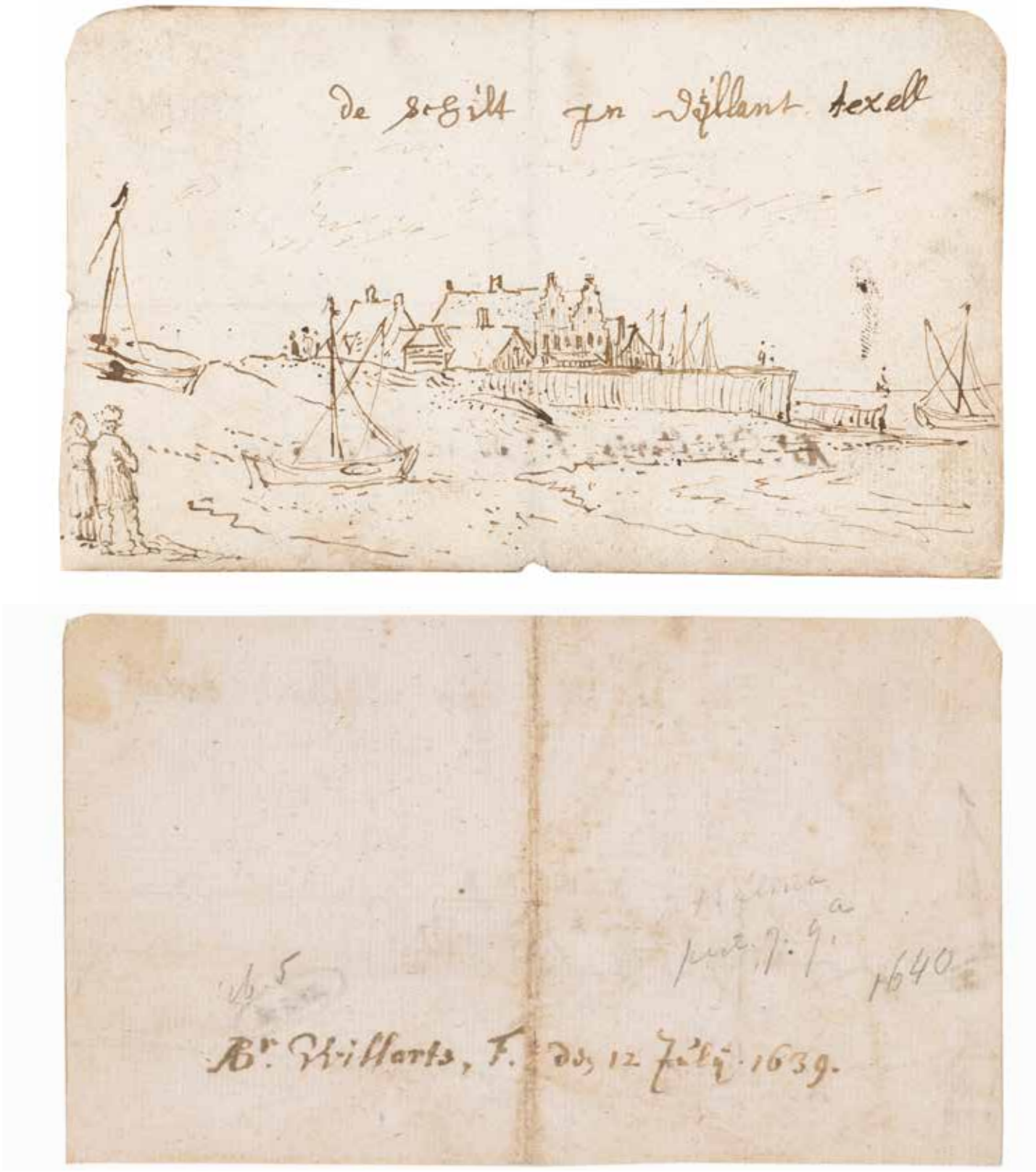
Abraham Willaerts' role in Johan Maurits' entourage, like that of Eckhout, must be pieced together from a handful, sometimes conflicting, archival references. Three contemporary sources are at the heart of this exploration. Arguably the most important is volume two of Cornelis de Bie's *Gulden cabinet vande edel vry schilder-const* (1662). According to De Bie, Willaerts was born in Utrecht in 1613, and received his training from his father Adam Willaerts, and later from Jan Bijlert in Utrecht and Simon Vouet in Paris, before "returning home, where he was called by Count Maurits to Brazil to draw and paint all kinds of strange things [vremdicheden]." The author writes that Abraham was sent to Africa where he "marched side by side with soldiers to the city of São Paulo in Angola, where for some time he observed and incorporated the strange customs of the country and the foreign people." He finally returned to the service of Johan Maurits, and was "received much more pleasantly" by him than before, "because his mind had been sharpened by seeing strange places."[29] De Bie concluded his short biography by stating that Willaerts joined the service of the architect Jacob van Campen, who had also been instrumental in promoting the career of Albert Eckhout.[30] Around 1659 Willaerts may have briefly left Utrecht for Rome, where he supposedly joined the illustrious 'Bentveughels', the burlesque group of Netherlandish painters who gave him the nickname 'de Indiaen', presumably a reference to his past in the Atlantic world. The evidence here, however, is laconic.[31] Willaerts can be traced back to his hometown in 1661,

a year before De Bie published his biography, and died in Utrecht on 18 October 1669.[32]

The second contemporary source is the Utrecht humanist Aernout van Buchell (1565-1641), a friend of the Willaerts family. In his diary, he recorded several encounters with Abraham's father Adam and his three sons. Van Buchell was an early investor in the West India Company and an avid follower of news from Brazil. He recorded Abraham's return from Paris in late September 1635, and several years later also described his departure to Brazil.[33] Van Buchell's entry in his diary is problematic for two reasons: first because he mentions Cornelis Willaerts rather than Abraham, and second because he does not mention the year of the painter's departure. The full entry in Buchelius' *Notae quotidianae* reads: "Corneille Villart, son of Adam and a talented master painter, will embark on 23 June to serve Count Maurits in America for a salary of 600 guilders per year and a place at the Count's table; before his departure he painted his father; he came to say goodbye to me".[34] The elderly Van Buchell must have either mixed up the two brothers or – more unlikely given Johan Maurits' preference for painters who had been specifically recommended to him – recorded the intended departure of Cornelis, who was then for some reason replaced by his younger brother. In any event, Cornelis (who never signed and painted marines independently) remained in Utrecht where he married twice, first in April 1638, and then in September 1639 after his first wife had died. His children from his first and second wife were born in 1639 and 1640, and he is recorded as living in Utrecht for the years between 1640 and 1642.[35] By combining the testimonies of Cornelis de Bie and Aernout van Buchell, and cross-referencing them with archival evidence in Utrecht and the dated paintings, it must be concluded that Abraham Willaerts, and not his brother Cornelis, embarked for Brazil. A second problem concerns the year of his departure: the twentieth-century editor of Buchelius' *Notae quotidianae*, Johannes W.C. van Campen, has placed this entry under the heading of 1638, but in doing so has given the wrong impression to users of his edition. In the final years of his life, Van Buchell copied various snippets of information from different years without paying much attention to chronology. Events from 1638, 1639, and 1640 are all written down on the same page without any distinction.[36]

Fortunately enough there is a third source, which has never been discussed before in the context of Willaerts' life. The Rijksmuseum keeps a small pen drawing of the village of Oudeschild at the island of Texel, signed "AB^{r} Willarts F., den 12. Julij 1639" (figs. 4a and 4b). Oudeschild was typically the last place where vessels of the West and East India Companies called to take in fresh water, while waiting for a favorable easterly wind. Willaerts could have easily traveled from Utrecht to Texel in three weeks, suggesting that Buchelius' entry for 23 June must be from the year 1639, and not from 1638 as has generally been assumed. Waiting for the right type of weather at the Texel roadstead could take several days or even weeks, and with the transoceanic voyage lasting between seven and nine weeks on average, the painter most likely arrived in Pernambuco in September or October 1639. Abraham Willaerts, then, could have disembarked in Recife when he was twenty-six years old, two years older than Post at the time he was hired by Johan Maurits, and probably about the same age as Albert Eckhout.

Unfortunately there are no archival records of Abraham Willaerts in the decimated West India Company archives, and the remaining evidence is circumstantial. Johan Maurits' artists enjoyed a privileged position at the court in Recife, and were allowed to sit at the 'free table' of the Count during ceremonial meals – something Buchelius mentioned as one of the stipulations in Willaerts' contract. There are two references in the archives of the WIC which shed light on the painters in Johan Maurits' court circle. Among the Recife papers (*Overgekomen brieven en papieren*) of the year 1641, there is an undated 'List of persons who ordinarily dine at the court of his Excellency'.[37] This list of 52 people includes members of the High Council and the Count's personal staff. Also seated at the table are "3 Pintres" who – like the others on the list – remain unnamed. That Frans Post and Albert Eckhout were among the three painters is generally assumed, and Willaerts might well have been the third as he had certainly arrived well before 1641.[38] A second list of dinner guests at Vrijburg Palace "who enjoy



the 'free table'" is more extensive. It is dated 1 April 1643 with under numbers fifteen and sixteen "Elbert Eeckhout [and] Frans Post, painters, both with assistents".[39] Georg Marcgraf is mentioned separately. The third artist remains unmentioned, but if we identify him as Willaerts, the pieces fall into place. If he was indeed the third painter on Johan Maurits' dinner list of 1641, all of this explains why there was no longer a third artist in Brazil in April 1643: after all Abraham was back in Utrecht on 6 December 1642.

4a
Abraham Willaerts, *View of Oudeschild*, recto, 1639, drawing, 9.6 x 15.9 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. RP-T-1916-5.

4b
Abraham Willaerts, *View of Oudeschild*, verso, 1639, drawing, 9.6 x 15.9 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. RP-T-1916-5.

Painting for a patron? Willaerts in Angola

The *View of Recife* throws new light on another painting attributed to Abraham Willaerts. According to De Bie, Willaerts joined the fleet to Angola, which left Pernambuco on 30 May 1641, with 21 ships and around 3.000 men, including some 300 Brazilian allies of the West India Company who participated in the transatlantic campaign.[40] Admiral Cornelis Jol decreed that once in sight of the Angolan harbor town São Paulo de Luanda, his own ship and three others would lead the attack, while the smaller vessels were expected to stay in the vicinity of the admiral's ship to take orders as the battle would unfold. The four ships, *Amsterdam*, *Eendracht*, *Overijssel*, and *Soutelande*, approached the Angolan shore on 25 August and anchored between the Penedo fortress and the rock formations of Caçandama a little further to the north. In small boats, Dutch soldiers rowed ashore, disembarked, and attacked the Portuguese on land – a major surprise for the defenders who had prepared for a prolonged naval battle. A small path led the Dutch troops from the beach up to the hills above São Paulo de Luanda, and although the Portuguese governor Pedro Cesar de Menezes quickly sent reinforcements, the first Dutch soldiers had already made landfall before the auxiliary troops arrived. The Dutch proceeded to attack Luanda from behind, and succeeded in taking the great slave station with minimal losses.[41]

Given the rocky coastline and the decisive strategic manoeuvres in the attack on Angola, and given Cornelis de Bie's claim that Abraham Willaerts "marched side by side with soldiers to the city of São Paulo", it is sensible to reassess the theme of a large painting in the collection of the Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen, signed and dated "Willarts F/1641", as a visual representation of this campaign (fig. 5).[42] As with so many other Willaerts paintings, the painting and its subject matter have divided opinions. Jeroen Giltaij, who believes the painting represents an imaginary naval battle, mentions consecutive attributions to Abraham (1827), Adam (1904), and Abraham (1951), while Laurens Bol in 1973 ascribes it first to the father and then to the son on the same page. Giltaij (1996) ultimately concludes that "in this case the stereotypical composition and the rather schematic way in which the

5
Abraham Willaerts, *A battle near a coast between Spaniards and disembarking Dutchmen (here identified as The battle of São Paulo de Luanda, 25 August 1641)*, 1641, oil on canvas, 163.5 x 243 cm, Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst, inv. KMSsp441.



waves are represented are characteristic for the son. Moreover", he adds, "the oldest attribution to Abraham from 1827 could have been done on historical grounds".[43]

The identities of both painter and depicted theme are of renewed interest in the light of Willaerts' *View of Recife* (fig. 1a). I, too, believe that the Copenhagen painting must be attributed to Abraham Willaerts on both historical and stylistic grounds. The sharp, bright colors and the repetitive pattern of small, grey tinted waves in the Copenhagen painting are very comparable to Willaerts' painting of the Recife roadstead. The Spanish ship in the 1641 painting somewhat resembles the ship in *View of Recife*, with the depiction of the lower half of the two sterns practically identical in both paintings. Most strikingly, perhaps, are the four small boats rowing quickly to shore, which closely resemble the welcoming boat on the right in the 1640 painting. Particularly the third boat approaching the coast, which immediately follows the smallest of the four, bears a strong resemblance to the 'Brazilian' boat because of its bow and the regular interchanging of sailors and soldiers dressed in red and black attire.

The Statens Museum currently mentions Angola as a possible subject of the painting on its website, but ultimately believes that it represents a November 1641 naval battle at São Vicente in Cape Verde between Spanish vessels and a Dutch fleet under Commander Aert Ghysels. Yet the battle at São Vicente – not a particularly noteworthy one – was exclusively a naval clash, and there is no record of troops making landfall on one of the archipelago's tiny islands. Based on the chain of events in the South Atlantic, it is impossible that Willaerts was present at São Vicente if indeed he participated in the attack on Angola. Willaerts must have first returned to Dutch Brazil, as De Bie insists, because the pattern of winds and currents in the South Atlantic dictated that all ships wanting to sail north along the African coast had to cross the ocean first, to avoid the dreaded doldrums around the equator. The first part of the Dutch invasion fleet to Angola returned to Recife only in the second week of November 1641. Willaerts, in other words, cannot have been at Cape Verde to witness Aert Ghysels' skirmish with a Spanish fleet. In contrast, it makes perfect sense to understand Willaerts' Copenhagen painting as a representation of the invasion of São Paulo de Luanda, a tactically astute victory for the Dutch which filled Johan Maurits with considerable pride. The size of the work, almost two and a half meters wide, suggests both an important victory and a wealthy patron, perhaps Johan Maurits himself.

This new interpretation of the Copenhagen painting, however, is not entirely unproblematic. The first obstacle is formed by the exploding ship in the background. One Dutch ship, the *Enchuysen*, is known to have exploded during the raid on the island of São Tomé two months later, but not during the battle for Angola.[44] The design of the fortress unfortunately offers no additional clues: on the one hand, the Penedo bulwarks have been refurbished or completely rebuilt so many times since the mid-seventeenth century that any attempt at recognition is futile. On the other hand, Willaerts' design of the structure looks rather generic, and resembles defensive structures in his father's oeuvre – perhaps because he finished the painting after returning to Utrecht.[45] So while Abraham Willaerts may have used the invasion of São Paulo de Luanda he attended in late August 1641 as an inspiration for the painting, it is almost certainly, as Kees Zandvliet has suggested, not a 'true-to-life' record on the spot.[46] A coastal view of São Paulo de Luanda attributed to the engraver Jan van Brosterhuyzen appears to confirm this, showing a markedly different representation of the Angolan entrepot.[47] Yet unlike Willaerts, neither Van Brosterhuyzen nor Frans Post, who designed the coastal view, is known to have sailed to Luanda. In all likelihood Willaerts made sketches which he used and embellished when the fleet returned to Brazil, and finished the painting at a later time.

The flags with the cross of Burgundy (the naval ensign of the Habsburg monarchy) on the masts of the defending ships, present another interpretative challenge. In December 1640, the Portuguese had launched the War of Restoration against Spain, unilaterally breaking the ties between the two Iberian crowns which had been imposed on Lisbon for sixty years. By the early summer of 1641, several months before the Dutch fleet arrived on

the horizon, the colonial regime in Angola had firmly pledged its support to the new Bragança monarchy. King Joao IV and the States-General, moreover, had agreed a ten years' truce in June of that same year, significantly hampering Johan Maurits' expansionist agenda in the South Atlantic.[48] The Count, however, pretended not to have been informed about this inconvenient geopolitical arrangement until well into 1642. This offered him the pretext to take possession of Maranhão and São Paulo de Luanda, but it ultimately led to significant resentment from the Portuguese hierarchy in Bahia.[49] Johan Maurits' attempt to have his marine painter frame the attack on Luanda as an attack on Spain might well explain the Habsburg flags. Willaerts' image of the Dutch invasion of Angola as an attack on the Spanish (and not the Portuguese) enemy, then, could be a result of the Count's self-interested rhetoric of ignorance. In turn, this would give credence to De Bie's remark that Willaerts, after returning to Brazil from Angola, "was received much more pleasantly by [Johan Maurits] than before". Finally, such a reading of Willaerts' panel would resemble the Count's use of art as a means of political propaganda, something which has been pointed out extensively with regard to Albert Eckhout and Frans Post.[50]

Conclusion

Within the context of the extensive historiography on Johan Maurits of Nassau-Siegen's circle of artists in Dutch Brazil, and even within scholarship on the global dimensions of Dutch seventeenth-century art more broadly, the recently acquired Abraham Willaerts' *View of Recife* (1640) represents a significant find. This article has argued that Willaerts is the third painter at Johan Maurits' court in Recife, providing a solid answer to a question that has been raised for many decades. That Willaerts made marine paintings of the Atlantic world is supported by newly interpreted and contextualized biographical sources. A signed drawing from the artist, made before departure from Texel in August 1639, suggests that he arrived in Brazil in the autumn of the same year. This enables us to better understand the cryptic diary note from Arnout van Buchell. Willaerts remained in the South Atlantic probably until the spring or summer of 1642.

Cornelis de Bie, in his *Gulden cabinet* written and published when the painter was still alive, intimates that Abraham Willaerts joined the Dutch invasion fleet to São Paulo de Luanda, in May 1641. Stylistic similarities between Willaerts' *View of Recife* in Het Scheepvaartmuseum and his painting of a battle near a coast in the Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen, indicate that the latter work may indeed represent the battle of São Paulo de Luanda on 25 August 1641, and gives further authority to the claim in De Bie's collective biography. Suggestions that this monumental painting depicts a 1641 naval battle at Cape Verde should thus be rejected. Another remark in the *Gulden cabinet*, that Willaerts was held in higher esteem by Johan Maurits after his return from Angola to Brazil, may suggest that the Count himself commissioned the artist to make a monumental painting of a transatlantic campaign that filled the Count with considerable pride. Ultimately, this essay demonstrates how valuable it can be to combine different types of sources, and to do more research on seventeenth-century marine painters beyond the genre's main protagonists such as Vroom and the Van de Velde's – both for art historians and for historians of early modern Europe's rapidly expanding world.

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NOTES

1 On the popularity of marine painting in Dutch society, see R. Daalder, *Van de Velde & zoon: Zeeschilders*: *The firm of Willem van de Velde the Elder and Willem van de Velde the younger, 1640-1707*, Leiden 2015; J. Giltaij (ed.), *Praise of ships and the sea: The Dutch marine painters of the 17th century*, Rotterdam 1996; M. Russell, *Visions of the sea: Hendrick C. Vroom and the origins of Dutch marine painting*, Leiden 1983; and L.J. Bol, *Die holländische Marinemalerei des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Braunschweig 1973. The foundational study of Brazilian art made in the service of Johan Maurits, still core reading today, is R. Joppien, 'The Dutch vision of Brazil: Johan Maurits and his artists', in E. van den Boogaart e.a. (eds.), *Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, 1604-1679: A humanist prince in Europe and Brazil*, The Hague 1979, pp. 297-376. See also P.J.P. Whitehead and M. Boeseman, *A portrait of Dutch 17th-century Brazil: Animals, plants and people by the artists of Johan Maurits of Nassau*, Amsterdam 1989. The impact of the visual art of Dutch Brazil on Brazil today is discussed in J. Berger Hochstrasser, 'Visual Impact: The long legacy of the artists of Dutch Brazil', in M. van Groesen (ed.), *The legacy of Dutch Brazil*, New York 2014, pp. 248-283.

2 On the global dimensions of seventeenth-century Dutch art, see T. Weststeijn, *Een wereldse kunst*, inaugural lecture, Utrecht University, 2017, with many further references. On the 'public' Atlantic world that emerged in the context of Dutch Brazil, see M. van Groesen, *Amsterdam's Atlantic: Print culture and the making of Dutch Brazil*, Philadelphia 2017.

3 See L.O. Nelemans, 'Adam Willaerts (1577-1664): Zee- en kustschilder en twee bijbelse voorstellingen te Utrecht', *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* (2001), pp. 26-56 spec. 33-34, based on L.O. Nelemans, 'Adam Willaerts (Londen 1577-Utrecht 1664): Zijn leven en werk, de religieuze schilderijen in het bijzonder', MA-thesis, Utrecht University, 1999. Nelemans 2001, p. 33 also states that the work of Adam has traditionally been held in higher esteem than that of his sons, but "why this is the case is nowhere explicitly indicated".

4 So far this has been done only very succinctly, see Bol 1973 (note 1), pp. 77-79; Giltaij 1996 (note 1), pp. 126-28.

5 Daalder 2015 (note 1), p. 52.

6 On the news map's popularity, and Duck's painting, see Van Groesen 2017 (note 2), pp. 80-82, 90-91. On Duck more generally, see J. Rosen, *Soldiers at leisure: The guardroom scene in Dutch genre paintings of the golden age*, Amsterdam 2010; J. Rosen, *Jacob Duck c. 1600-1667: Catalogue raisonné*, Amsterdam 2017.

7 H. van Nederveen Meerkerk, *Recife: The rise of a 17th-century trade city from a cultural-historical perspective*, Assen 1989, pp. 46-47; O.F. Hefting, 'High versus low: Portuguese and Dutch fortification traditions meet in colonial Brazil (1500-1654)', in E. Klingelhofer (ed.), *First forts: Essays on the archaeology of proto-colonial fortifications*, Leiden 2010, pp. 201-203. On the impact of the loss of Salvador on West India Company policy in Recife five years later, see M. van Groesen, 'Lessons learned: The second Dutch conquest of Brazil and the memory of the first", *Colonial Latin American review* 20 (2011), nr 2, pp. 167-193.

8 Van Nederveen Meerkerk 1989 (note 7), pp. 50-53, 56.

9 On ship portraiture as a subgenre, see Russell 1983 (note 1), pp. 51-61. On coastal scenes of Dutch overseas settlements in the seventeenth century, see M. Gosselink, *Land in zicht: Vingboons tekent de wereld van de 17e eeuw*, Zwolle 2007.

10 For the many names of artisans from Amsterdam who traveled to Recife with the intention of settling in Dutch Brazil in the early 1640s, see J. G. van Dillen (ed.), *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van het bedrijfsleven en het gildewezen in Amsterdam*, 3 vols., The Hague 1929-1974.

11 J.C.M. Warnsinck, 'Een mislukte aanslag op Nederlandsch Brazilië, 1639-1640', *De gids* 104 (1940), pp. 174-206.

12 J. Bender, *Dutch warships in the age of sail: 1600-1714: Designs, constructions, careers and fates*, Barnsley 2014, p. 155.

13 The composition of the fleet and the names of the participating ships are meticulously recorded by the Amsterdam newspaper *Courante uyt Italien en Duytschlandt &c.* (published by Jan van Hilten): issue 51, 17-12-1639 mentions the *Prins Hendrick* in a list of 24 ships (for the Amsterdam chamber leaving Texel for Brazil); and again in issue 3, 21-01-1640, when the fleet was made to wait for favorable weather until 17 January 1640.

14 "1 stuckje vant schip *Alckmaer* ende lantcasteel vant Recife met een aerdich geteeckent met een swarte ebbe lijst", see J. Belonje, 'Capiteyn Croeger', *Maandblad Amstelodamum* 65 (1978), Jan/Feb, pp. 1-3. Cornelis Croeger, the owner of the painting, had ultimately been forced to hand over his ship to the WIC after a conflict over smuggling in the late 1630s.

15 Daalder 2015 (note 1), pp. 58-61 demonstrates, for example, that both the famous Dutch admiral Michiel de Ruyter (d. 1676) and the long-standing Dutch East India Company captain Hendrick Govertsz Grotenhuijs owned several paintings related to their own expeditions. In this case, the identity of the captain of the *Prins Hendrick* around 1640 is unknown.

16 For example Adam Willaerts studio, *Beach view with ships off a coast*, ca. 1650, panel, 41.5 x 62.5 cm, sale London, Phillips, 07-07-1998, see RKD*images*, nr 32102, currently, following Otto Nelemans, attributed to the Willaerts studio.

17 Abraham Willaerts, *Dutch ships approaching a coast*, 1643, panel, 42.7 x 65 cm, sale London, Sotheby's, 08-07-1999, see RKD*images*, nr 31564. The composition however differs from the 1640 painting and contains multiple vessels in the background and several people in the foreground, which form a key feature in Willaerts workshop.

18 R. Daalder and E. Spits (eds.), *Schepen van de gouden eeuw*, Zutphen 2005, pp. 115-22.

19 "… ayant eu dans mon service le temps de ma demeure au Brésil, six peintres, dont chacun a curieusement peint á quoy il estoit le plus capable", Johan Maurits of Nassau-Siegen to Simon Arnauld, Marquis de Pomponne, 21-12-1678, see

E. Larsen, *Frans Post: Interpréte du Brésil*, Rio de Janeiro/ Amsterdam 1962, p. 254, nr 52.

20 Eckhout's pictorial oeuvre has been assembled in R. Parker Brienen (ed.), *Albert Eckhout: Visões do paraíso selvagem: Obra completa*, Rio de Janeiro 2010. The best and most comprehensive study on Eckhout is R. Parker Brienen, *Visions of savage paradise: Albert Eckhout, court painter of Dutch Brazil*, Amsterdam 2006. Recent exhibition catalogues include B. Berlowicz (ed.), *Albert Eckhout volta ao Brasil / returns to Brazil (1644-2002)*, Copenhagen 2002; and Q. Buvelot (ed.), *Albert Eckhout: A Dutch artist in Brazil*, Zwolle 2004. On Post, whose known oeuvre is far more extensive than that of Eckhout, see P. Correa do Lago and B. Correa do Lago (eds.), *Frans Post (1612-1680): Catalogue raisonné*, Milan 2007. Recent scholarship includes B. Schmidt, 'The 'Dutch' 'Atlantic' and the dubious case of Frans Post', in G. Oostindie and J.V. Roitman (eds.), *Dutch Atlantic connections, 1680-1800: Linking empires, bridging borders*, Leiden 2014, pp. 249-72; R. Parker Brienen, 'Who owns Frans Post? Collecting Frans Post's Brazilian landscapes', in Van Groesen 2014 (note 1), pp. 229-247; E. van den Boogaart, 'A well-governed colony: Frans Post's illustrations in Caspar Barlaeus's history of Dutch Brazil', *Rijksmuseum bulletin* 59 (2011), nr 3, pp. 236-271; and D. de Souza Leão Vieira, 'Topografias imaginárias: A paisagem política do Brasil Holandês em Frans Post, 1637-1669', PhD diss., Leiden University, 2010. A report of an exceptional recent find is A. de Bruin, 'Frans Post: Animals in Brazil', *Master drawings* 54 (2016), nr 3, pp. 292-368.

21 There is no archival material suggesting that either of the brothers ever went to Brazil. E. Larsen, 'Some seventeenth-century paintings of Dutch Brazil', *Connoisseur* (1970), Oct, pp. 123-131, spec. p. 127 assumes that Peeters crossed the Atlantic. K. Zandvliet, *Mapping for money: Maps, plans, and topographic paintings and their role in Dutch overseas expansion during the 16th and 17th centuries*, Amsterdam 2002, p. 244 is inclined to believe that he did not, and that his paintings are based on the maps and views of others. See also the painting of Brazilian allies of the Dutch signed by Gillis Peeters in Van Groesen 2017 (note 2), p. 151.

22 See Parker Brienen 2006 (note 20), p. 16; E. van den Boogaart, 'The population of the Brazilian plantation colony depicted by Albert Eckhout, 1641-1643', in Berlowicz 2002 (note 20), p. 130, n4. On Marcgraf, see Whitehead 1989 (note 1). On Wagner, see O.H. Spohr, *Zacharias Wagner: Second commander of the Cape*, Cape Town 1967.

23 The case for Willaerts has previously been made by Erik Larsen, but his arguments have never been entirely convincing, mainly because of a lack of surviving work. See E. Larsen, 'Neu entdeckte Brasilien-Bilder von Frans Post, Abraham Willaerts und Gillis Peeters I', *Weltkunst* 72 (2002), nr. 6, Teil 1 pp. 162-164, Teil 2, pp. 936-937, where he attributes two paintings, signed A.W., to Willaerts, but is extremely succinct in providing information on the two compositions and their current whereabouts. See also the more balanced assessment by the same author in *Frans Post: Interprete du Brésil*, pp. 43-44, 171.

24 On Johan Maurits' upbringing, see N. Mout, 'The youth of Johan Maurits, and aristocratic culture in the early seventeenth century', in Van den Boogaart 1979 (note 1), pp. 13-38.

25 Amsterdam, Het Scheepvaartmuseum, inv. A.3457, see Correa do Lago 2007 (note 20), pp. 372-77.

26 Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, SK-A-4271, see Correa do Lago 2007 (note 20), pp. 86-89.

27 The most meticulous biographical study of Albert Eckhout (or Eeckhout as the authors insist) is F. Egmond and P. Mason, 'Albert E(e)ckhout: Court painter', in Buvelot 2004 (note 20), pp. 109-127. Although the evidence Egmond and Mason present is clear (pp. 109-110), I choose to write Eckhout (without the additional e) to connect with prior scholarship.

28 Egmond and Mason in Buvelot 2004 (note 20), p. 117 suddenly depart from their rigorous approach to primary sources by saying that "we consider it possible" that Eckhout traveled with Johan Maurits and Post to Brazil in late 1636 while admitting that "there is no hard evidence to support it".

29 "… wederom naer huys ghekeert zijnde is van zijn Excelentie Graeff Maurus in *Bresel* ontboden om aldaer alle vremdicheden te teeckenen ende te schilderen, den Graeff sondt hem met de Vloot naar Africa ende marcheerde beneffens de Soldaten naer de Stadt S. Paule in Angoola, daer hy eenighen tijt de vremde manieren van het Landt ende conditien der uytlantse menschen ghesien en leeren kennen heeft. Van daer werderom comende quam inden dienst vanden voorseyden Graeff, en wert veel aenghenamer ende willecommer by hem onthaelt als te vore, uyt reden dat sijn verstant door t'ghesicht der vremde plaetsen, al vry wat scherper ende cloecker gheworden was", see Cornelis de Bie, *Het gulden cabinet vande edel vry schilder-const*, Utrecht 1662, p. 247. Arnold Houbraken later copied De Bie's biography, but transcribed 'Bresel' as Brussels, adding further confusion to Willaerts' biography. Jan Sysmus, the Amsterdam physician who composed a register of painters in the 1670s, confirms Abraham's training with Vouet in Paris, but does not mention his presence in Brazil, see A. Bredius, 'Het schildersregister van Jan Sysmus', *Oud Holland* 12 (1894), pp. 160-171, spec. p. 167.

30 Eckhout's association with Pieter Post, Frans' older brother, had probably helped to establish the bond between Johan Maurits and the landscape painter, see Egmond and Mason in Buvelot 2004 (note 20), pp. 113-117, 122-125; Parker Brienen 2006 (note 20), pp. 30-31. On Van Campen and the Post brothers, see P. Correa do Lago and B. Correa do Lago, 'Frans Post: His life and work in four phases', in Correa do Lago 2007 (note 20), pp. 27-29.

31 The reference to the painter's time in Rome is problematic. It is being repeated in artistic biographies of Abraham Willaerts, but De Bie – who writes around 1660 – does not refer to Willaerts' Italian sojourn at all. He does state that Willaerts is 'tegenwoordich' living in Utrecht. Parish registers and other data from Rome on the Netherlandish community of artists do not provide conclusive evidence. The most credible citation of the name 'Indiaen' for Willaerts is F. Noack, *Das Deutschtum in Rom seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters*, Stuttgart 1927, vol. 2, p. 647.

32 I am grateful to Marten Jan Bok for sharing his data on the Willaerts family. Much of what I write here is based on his as yet unpublished prosopography of seventeenth-century Utrecht artists, some of which can be found in the ECARTICO database of the University of Amsterdam, www.vondel.humanities.uva.nl/ecartico/persons/8282; consulted 13-12-2018.

33 "Adam Willaerts tweede soon uuyt Francrijc wedergecomen. Habet iam tres filios pictores", see J.W.C. van Campen (ed.), *Notae quotidianae van Aernout van Buchell*, Utrecht 1940, p. 51. On Buchelius' interest in the affairs of the West India Company, see J. Pollmann, *Religious choice in the Dutch Republic: The reformation of Arnoldus Buchelius (1565-1641)*, Manchester 1999, pp. 147-148.

34 "Corneille Villart, fils d'Adam, bon maistre contrefatteur ira le 23 Junii à la navire pour le service du compte de Maurice en Amérique au gaige de 600 fl[orins] per an avec te table du Sr.; il depengnoit devant son partement son père; il me dict à Dieu.", see Van Campen 1940 (note 33), p. 68.

35 Nelemans 2001 (note 3), p. 53.

36 Van Campen 1940 (note 33), pp. vii-viii. See also p. 69, n2, where newly elected elders in the Utrecht consistory were all put together in one entry of his diary, while the appointments were made in successive years. One of the next entries for June (pp. 68-69), about the death of Hendrik van Voorst

after having spent ten months in a Dunkirk prison, refers to June 1640 (Van Voorst left New Netherland in late July 1639, and was captured by privateers in early August). The days Buchelius mentions regarding the death of Van Voorst, Sunday 23 June and Tuesday 25 June, correspond to the Gregorian calendar of 1640, not 1638. The next entry (p. 69) mentions a pamphlet which was published in 1639, but which is again rubricated by Van Campen under 1638, etc. Clearly Buchelius' *Notae quotidianae* does not give a fair reflection of the chronology of events.

37 'Lijste des personnes qui mangent d'ordinaire a la cour de son Extie', Nationaal Archief, OWIC 56, nr 298c (recto). On the issue of the 'free table', a lavish arrangement which angered the directors of the WIC, see E. Odegard, 'Colonial careers: Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, Rijckloff Volckertsz. van Goens, and career-making in the seventeenth-century Dutch empire', PhD diss., Leiden University, 2018, pp. 95-96.

38 Eckhout made seven paintings in Pernambuco dated 1641, although there is discussion about the reliability of the dates, see Q. Buvelot, 'Albert Eckhout: A Dutch artist in Brazil', in Buvelot 2004 (note 20), pp. 32-33, 46-54. Post's last surviving painting made in Brazil is dated 23 March 1640, see Correa do Lago 2007 (note 20), pp. 110-111), but he is documented as still being in Recife in April 1643.

39 "Elbert Eeckhout [en] Frans Post, schilders beijde met jongens", Nationaal Archief, OWIC 58, nr 206 (recto).

40 K. Ratelband, 'De expeditie van Jol naar Angola en São Thomé, 30 Mei 1641-31 Oct. 1641', *West-Indische gids* 24 (1942), pp. 321-344. spec. p. 323 provides a list of participating ships. The number of 300 Brazilians, at least twenty of whom died of illness on the way to Angola, is mentioned by Johan Maurits in a letter to the 'Heeren XIX' from 11-11-1641, Nationaal Archief, OWIC, 56, nr 260, fol. 1r.

41 Ratelband 1942 (note 40), pp. 332-336.

42 Abraham Willaerts' rock repoussoir in this painting is reminiscent of sketches by Roelant Savery, a close friend of his father's, see J. Spicer, 'A pictorial vocabulary of otherness: Roelandt Saverij, Adam Willarts, and the representation of foreign coasts', *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 48 (1997), pp. 28-31.

43 See Giltaij 1996 (note 1), p. 128. For mutually excluding attributions, see Bol 1973 (note 1), p. 330, n180 (Adam), n183 (Abraham). It is indeed conceivable that the canvas came into the collection of the museum in 1775 through the network of descendants of Abraham Willaerts, whose oldest son Otto migrated to Denmark in the late 1680s and permanently settled there (personal correspondence of Marten Jan Bok), although if this reading is followed through, the possible patronage of Johan Maurits (see note 32) would be difficult to explain. The painting was certainly not part of Johan Maurits' gift to King Frederick III of Denmark in 1654, which is documented in great detail.

44 Ratelband 1942 (note 40), p. 339.

45 See P.R., 'As fortalezas de Luanda', *Diogo-Cão: Revísta ilustrada de assúntos históricos* (1932), nr 5, pp. 135-138; nr 6, pp. 165-166. I am grateful to Mariana de Campos Françozo for helping me obtain a copy of the article. Regarding the comparison with his father's work, see for example Adam Willaerts, *A Dutch squadron attacking a Spanish fortress*, signed "A Willaerts" and dated 1622, 40.5 x 76 cm, Greenwich, National Maritime Museum, inv. BHC0801.

46 Zandvliet 2002 (note 21), pp. 239, 296, n67. The same could of course be said for many of the landscape paintings by Post and all the paintings Eckhout made for the Count, see for instance Van den Boogaart 2011 (note 20), and Parker Brienen 2006 (note 20).

47 Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. RP-P-1951-71 (left side); inv. BI-1892-3415-51 (right side), prints in C. Barlaeus, *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia*, Amsterdam 1647.

48 K. Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika 1600-1650: Angola, Kongo en São Tomé*, Zutphen 2000, pp. 102-103.

49 C.R. Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil, 1624-1654*, Oxford 1957, pp. 103-108.

50 Parker Brienen 2006 (note 20); Van den Boogaart 2011 (note 20).

SUMMARY

In 2017, Het Scheepvaartmuseum in Amsterdam purchased a marine painting of Dutch Brazil (fig. 1a), made by the Utrecht artist Abraham Willaerts (ca. 1613-1669). The modest panel, signed A.W. and dated 1640, sheds new light on the global dimensions of art in the Dutch Golden Age in general, and the history of Dutch Brazil in particular. It is well known that Count Johan Maurits of Nassau-Siegen (1604-1679) invited the artists Frans Post (1612-1680) and Albert Eckhout (ca. 1610-ca. 1666) to his court in Recife between 1637 and 1644. He later claimed to have had as many as six artists in his retinue, yet the search among art historians for colleagues of Post and Eckhout has long proved elusive. The discovery of *View of Recife* provides strong evidence that Abraham Willaerts should be mentioned in the same breath as Post and Eckhout. Based on an array of textual and visual evidence – some of it new, some reinterpreted – the author argues that Willaerts spent more than two years in Dutch Brazil and the Atlantic world, from the fall of 1639 to the spring or summer of 1642.

In a re-evaluation of Willaerts' oeuvre in the light of these conclusions, this article suggests that a large canvas in the collection of the Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen should be regarded as a representation of the successful Dutch attack on São Paulo de Luanda in Angola in May 1641. Taking into account the monumental size of the painting, and substantiated by documentary sources such as archival records, it is highly likely that Johan Maurits himself ordered the work directly from Willaerts after the artist's return to Brazil. Ultimately, this essay demonstrates the value of combining different types of historical and art historical sources, to gain a better understanding of early modern Europe's rapidly expanding world.