



Dominicus van Tol

(Bodegraven? ca. 1635 – 1676
Leiden)

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Dominicus van Tol's parents were Simon van Tol and Catharina Vechters. When and where Dominicus was born cannot be established with certainty. He is thought to have been born around 1635 in Bodegraven, where his father worked as a notary public between 1630, the year he married in Leiden, and 1643, when the family moved to Leiden. 1 Dominicus came from a long line of notaries, including his father, grandfather and brother Roeland.

Van Tol's mother, Catharina, was the daughter of glassmaker Vechter Vechters van Strijvelt and Marytgen Jans van Rosenberg. After her father died in 1604, her mother took a second husband, the glassmaker Douwe Jansz de Vries van Arentsveld, with whom she had two sons. One of them was Gerrit Dou (1613–75), who was thus Van Tol's uncle. Because of this connection, Dou is assumed to have been Van Tol's teacher. 2 The close ties between Gerrit Dou and the Van Tol family manifested themselves in other ways as well; by the mid-1650s Anthonia van Tol, Dominicus's younger sister, lived in Gerrit Dou's house. She was in charge of the housekeeping, which led Dou to name her the sole heir of his considerable estate a year before his death.

Van Tol established himself as an independent painter relatively late in life, only becoming a member of the Guild of Saint Luke in 1664. 3 It does not seem that he prospered as an artist in Leiden; he left the city in 1669. 4 The declining market for painting may have prompted him to seek his fortune elsewhere. 5 He chose Utrecht, the home of his aunt Machtelt van Tol, who was married to the well-to-do, influential Frederick van Beeck, steward of the Carthusian Order, from whose network Van Tol may have hoped to benefit. 6 In 1670 he married Maria Pollion, a preacher's daughter from Woudenberg, near Utrecht. 7 Van Tol's tracks in Utrecht can be traced up to 1672, the Year of Disaster, when the French army that had invaded the Dutch Republic also occupied the town. Van Tol did not wait for the siege, but fled with his wife and (presumably) his infant son Simon Petrus to Amsterdam. 8 Van Tol certainly lived in Amsterdam for some time; his daughter Johanna Catherina was born there in 1674. 9 Yet whether he resided there continuously until 1675—the year he returned to Leiden—is uncertain. 10 There are indications that he stayed in Leiden regularly prior to 1675. 11



The family was definitely back in Leiden in 1675, when Van Tol registered again with the Guild of Saint Luke. It is highly doubtful, however, that he fared better there this time. Nearly all of the archival documents relating to him after he returned to Leiden point to great financial problems. ¹² In 1676 his dire situation prompted him to seek permission from the city council to sell beer from his house, *de Blauwe Werelt*, located on the Bierkay along the Oude Vest opposite the Lakenhal. His request was granted on 6 February, but Van Tol died in December of that same year and was buried in the Pieterskerk on 26 December 1676. He left behind so many debts his widow declared “that she forwent the estate and relinquished it for the sake of the creditors while her aforementioned husband’s corpse was still . . . above the ground, and accordingly laid the keys on the coffin and left wearing her everyday clothes.” ¹³ Shortly thereafter Maria Pollion moved to Westzaandam, where she married Pieter Milius from Amsterdam in 1679.

-Piet Bakker

Endnotes

1. W. I. C. Rammelman Elsevier, “Dominicus van Tol, schilder te Leiden, geb. 1631, overl. 1676,” in D.O. Obreen et al., *Archief voor Nederlandsche kunstgeschiedenis* 7 vols. (Rotterdam 1877-90), vol. 5 (1882-83), 344. If Van Tol was born in Bodegraven, this would explain the absence of a birth certificate, as baptismal registers were kept there only as of 1642. However, it should be taken into account that after marrying in 1630, his father seems to have first been a notary in Woerden, and in 1633 he is mentioned twice in documents, both as secretary of Katwijk and secretary of ‘t Sandt. Hence, the family did not live uninterruptedly in Bodegraven between 1630 and 1643.

2. This tutelage, however, is not documented. Although Van Tol’s training with Dou is not discussed here, it should be noted that Dominicus was related to another renowned Leiden painter and glassmaker, Abraham Toorenvliet, the father of the painter Jacob van Toorenvliet (see his biography in this catalogue). According to Arnold Houbraken, Abraham was also a reputable drawing teacher, whose pupils included his son Jacob, Frans van Mieris, and Mathijs Naiveu. In 1650 Abraham Toorenvliet married Geertrui de Somer, the widow of Jan Dou, Gerrit’s brother. And a sister of Geertrui, Catharina, was married to glassmaker Vechter Vechters, an uncle of Van Tol. See the Leiden Baptism, Wedding and Burial Registers, RAL.

3. If Van Tol was indeed born around 1635, then he joined the guild at the rather late age of twenty-nine. He could have worked as an assistant to another painter in the years prior to registering with the guild. The most likely candidate would have been Van Tol’s uncle Gerrit Dou, whose work he emulated. If he was born in 1640 or 1641, which is theoretically possible given that his father moved to Leiden only in 1643, then the timing of his guild registration is more consistent with the customary pattern.



4. According to Abraham Bredius (in Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenen Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* [Leipzig, 1907–50], without giving his source), Van Tol left Leiden in 1669. Perhaps Bredius noticed that Van Tol did not pay his guild contribution that year, which is indeed the case. He was not alone, however, for not a single other painter paid: the contributions were not collected in 1669 or 1670.

5. Piet Bakker, “Crisis? Welke crisis? Kanttekeningen bij de economische neergang van de schilderkunst in Leiden na 1660,” *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 27 (2011): 232–70.

6. A brother of Frederick was a member of the Utrecht town council in the 1660s and later served as an alderman. Two of his sons were also on the town council in the years when Dominicus van Tol resided in Utrecht. Information kindly provided by Marten Jan Bok.

7. The couple drew up a marriage contract in Utrecht on 22 March 1670. Dominicus van Tol was assisted by his widowed mother Catharina Vechten, among others, and his future wife Maria Pollion was assisted by her father Petrus Pollion, preacher in Woudenberg, and her mother Johanna van Goor. See HUA, NA, not. J. Duerkant, inv. U070b001. The couple posted their banns in Leiden on 4 April and subsequently probably married in Woudenberg. The name “Pollion” does not occur in Leiden and none of her relatives seem to have been residents there, so we may assume that the couple met and became acquainted in Utrecht in 1669.

8. The birth certificate of Simon Pieter (“Simon Petrus”) known to have been born in 1672, has not yet been found either in Utrecht or in Amsterdam, and so his place of birth cannot be established, as is the case for Dominicus himself.

9. SAA, Doopboek 66/294 NZK.

10. In a Leiden deed of 16 September 1672, in which his sister Anthonia authorizes her uncle Frederick van Beeck to hand over to Van Tol in Amsterdam 1,000 guilders from the inheritance of his grandparents Mathias van Tol and Anthonia Gerrits, the artist was said to be “residerende in Amsterdam” (residing in Amsterdam). See RAL NA not. D. de Fries, inv. 1223, deed 93. Another Leiden document, dated 1 January 1675, regarding an outstanding debt to the brewer Jacob Heyns, states that the painter was “woonactich” (living) in Amsterdam. However, as he signed this document himself, he must have been in Leiden at that moment. See RAL, NA not. J. Gerstecoren, inv. 1150, deed 1.

11. Stemming from 1673, for example, is a small dated portrait of an unknown militiaman posing before the gate of the Saint George Civic Guard headquarters in Leiden (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. SK-C-21). Two other individual civic guardsman portraits display the exact same background and have virtually identical dimensions. One of the sitters has been identified as Jacobus van den Bergh, who was captain of the civic guard in Leiden between 1667 and 1674 (Leiden, Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, inv. 433; private collection). There is also a fourth portrait of the same size and with the same gate in the background; the sitter, an officer, is shown in three-quarter view rather than full face, as is the case in the other portraits (photo RKD). Together these pictures seem to constitute a group commission granted in 1673 (or thereabouts) that may have included several more portraits of officers, which have been lost. If, in fact, there was a group commission, Van Tol would then have spent a protracted period of time in Leiden around 1673.

12. To give an example of his troubles, one can point to three loans: 600 guilders, RAL, NA not. J. Gerstecoren, inv. 1150, deed 1, 1 January 1675; 800 guilders, idem, not. J. Stam, inv. 1270, 11 July 1675; and 600 guilders, idem, not. D. de Fries, inv. 1227, deed 14, 23 January 1676, all of which he was unable to repay. Illustrative of the financial problems that seem to have dogged him throughout his career is the bill that Utrecht grocer Michiel Baudart sent him in 1675 “ter saecke van geleverde waren bij hem comp[aran]t aende voornoemde Sr. Toll inden jare 1671 ende 1672 geleverd” (regarding goods delivered by him, the party appearing here, to the aforementioned Mr. Tol in the years 1671 and 1672). See HUA, NA not. W. van Velpen, inv. U072a006, deed 164. The thousand guilders he inherited from his grandparents in 1672 (see note 10) as well as the thousand guilders that devolved to him from his uncle Gerrit Dou’s estate in 1675 were not sufficient to alleviate his financial worries.

13. “Dat sij den boedel abandonneerde en daervan afstant dede ten behoeve van de Crediteuren terwijl het lyck van haer voornoemde man alsnoch ... boven aerde stont, leggende mitsdien de sleutels op de kiste en uytgaende in hare dagelyxsen klederen.” Bredius Notes, RKD, referring to RAL, Stedelijk Archief (SA II) Dingboek, 22 December 1676.

Literature

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