



Lambert Jacobsz

(Amsterdam ca. 1598 – 1636 Leeuwarden)

How to cite

Bakker, Piet. “Lambert Jacobsz” (2020). Rewritten by Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. (2024). In *The Leiden Collection Catalogue*, 4th ed. Edited by Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. and Elizabeth Nogrady with Caroline Van Cauwenberge. New York, 2023–. <https://theleidencollection.com/artists/lambert-jacobsz/> (accessed December 26, 2024).

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Lambert Jacobsz was born in Amsterdam around 1598 to the Mennonite cloth merchant Jacob Theunisz (ca. 1569–1624) and Pietertje Lubberts, whose father was the famous Mennonite teacher Lubbert Gerrits (1535–1612).^[1] Jacobsz grew up on Nieuwendijk amid fellow believers, including the young Jacob Backer (1608/9–51)—a distant relative and, later, Jacobsz’s pupil and assistant—who lived diagonally opposite him. Jacobsz’s teacher was likely Jan Pynas (1581–1631), who may also have been a Mennonite and who lived a stone’s throw away from Lambert’s parental home.^[2]

Whether Jacobsz was active as an independent painter after his training in Amsterdam is unknown. In 1620, he married Aechje Thonis (d. before 1632), daughter of the Mennonite cloth merchant Thonis Christiaens from Leeuwarden.^[3] The famous Dutch writer Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679)—a close family friend—penned a poem in honor of their marriage.^[4] How the Amsterdam painter found a spouse in Leeuwarden can undoubtedly be explained by his and his new wife’s shared religious beliefs. Mennonites formed a tight community both locally and nationally; among them, *buitentrouw* (“outside marriage”)—marrying someone outside the church—was forbidden. The parents of Lambert Jacobsz and Aechje Thonis, both cloth merchants, probably knew each other and had likely sought an appropriate marriage for their children.^[5] The couple settled in the Frisian capital, and Jacobsz, “painter from Amsterdam” (*schildenaer van Amsterdam*), became a citizen there in 1621.^[6] Their sons Jacob and Abraham—who would later call themselves “Van den Tempel”^[7]—were born shortly thereafter. Like his father, Abraham van den Tempel (1622/3–72) became a painter and today is considered one of the leading portraitists of the Golden Age.^[8]

In the footsteps of his maternal grandfather, Lambert Jacobsz was also a teacher and preacher of the Waterland congregation, a moderate faction of the Mennonite church. In 1631, he cosponsored the construction of a meeting house in Leeuwarden, which he inaugurated with a sermon about the Parable of the Ten Virgins.^[9] In his role as a preacher, he was regularly invited to speak to fellow believers far beyond Friesland. According to Arnold Houbraken, it was at such a meeting in Kleve that Jacobsz managed to convince the father of Govaert Flinck (1615–60) that art was an honorable profession. Thus reassured, Flinck’s father acceded to his son’s desire to become a painter and granted him permission to train with Jacobsz.^[10] Around 1629, Flinck’s apprenticeship with Jacobsz began.^[11] In Jacobsz’s workshop, Flinck would have also had the opportunity to meet Jacob Backer, who had been there since 1627. After apprenticing (like Jacobsz) with Jan Pynas in Amsterdam, Backer completed his training in Leeuwarden with Jacobsz and subsequently was an assistant in Jacobsz’s workshop for several years.^[12] In addition to these two famous painters, some of the most important Frisian artists either studied under Jacobsz or assisted him in his workshop.^[13]

Lambert Jacobsz was widowed in 1633 and married again, this time to Hillegont Dircks from Hoorn. Her father was the famous historian Theodorus Velius (1572–1630), to whom Jacobsz’s brother Anthonius Roscius (1593–1624), a physician and friend of Velius, had dedicated a poem in his *Chronyck van Hoorn* (1617).^[14] Jacobsz’s second marriage lasted only briefly, because he succumbed to the plague on June 27, 1636, three days after his wife. His then thirteen-year-old son, Abraham van den Tempel, escaped this tragic fate as he was boarding with the cloth merchant Jan Pouwels on Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal in Amsterdam.^[15] Jacobsz’s estate, including some sixty *onvercoft* (“unsold”) paintings among the household effects, was not inventoried until October 1637.^[16]

Jacobsz undoubtedly traded an artistic career in cosmopolitan Amsterdam, where he had access to the Mennonite elite, for Leeuwarden because the art market there was growing just as explosively as in the rest of the Dutch Republic, and the city did not have enough painters to meet the rapidly expanding demand. Initially, this shortage was filled by artists from the



province of Holland, who crossed the Zuiderzee from Amsterdam to offer their work at fairs in Friesland. However, around 1620, demand was so great that it proved profitable to conduct this trade from within Friesland.^[17] After Jacobsz took up residence in Leeuwarden, he also began to work as an art dealer. From 1625 or shortly thereafter, he maintained close relations with Hendrick Uylenburgh (ca. 1587–1661), as well as with a number of leading painters in Amsterdam and Utrecht, among them Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69).^[18]

In Leeuwarden, Jacobsz also developed into a highly accomplished painter of portraits and history subjects. The several dozen paintings that can be attributed to him today from that period of his career evidence stylistic and thematic similarities with the work of artists close to Pieter Lastman (1583–1633) and with the Utrecht Caravaggists.^[19] Jacobsz initially and primarily painted small-scale history scenes after his own designs, but he also copied and adapted compositions by artists whose paintings he sold. Around 1628, Jacobsz expanded his repertoire and began painting large-figure history scenes.^[20] This second track cannot be seen in isolation from the arrival, in 1627, of his former neighbor, Jacob Backer, who executed several large-figure history paintings in Leeuwarden. An excellent example is Backer's *Tribute Money* in Stockholm, which was previously attributed to Jacobsz.^[21]

Not a single painting with large figures is known from Jacobsz's workshop after 1633—the year that he painted his *King David Singing Psalms* after Honthorst, now in the Fries Museum. This stylistic shift in his production must be tied to Backer's departure for Amsterdam in or shortly after 1633.^[22] At the same time or soon thereafter, Flinck also left to continue his training with Rembrandt in Uylenburgh's shop in Amsterdam. Backer's and Flinck's departures would certainly have impacted production in Jacobsz's workshop; however, given the favorable art market in Leeuwarden, their departures did not reduce his output. As is clear from Jacobsz's estate, he had a successful and lucrative career, and he left his sons Abraham and Jacob a substantial inheritance. It was large enough for the guardian of the two brothers, Jan Tonnis, to join, in their name, the eighteen-member consortium that invested a considerable sum of money into Hendrick Uylenburgh's art dealership in 1640.^[23]

- Piet Bakker, 2020

Endnotes

1. Unless otherwise noted, all biographical information on Lambert Jacobsz is taken from Hendrik Fredrik Wijnman, “Nieuwe gegevens omtrent de schilder Lambert Jacobsz I,” *Oud Holland* 47 (1930): 145–57; and Hendrik Fredrik Wijnman, “Nieuwe gegevens omtrent de schilder Lambert Jacobsz II,” *Oud Holland* 51 (1934): 241–55.
2. S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, “De jonge Rembrandt onder tijdgenoten. Godsdienst en religie in Leiden en Amsterdam,” PhD diss., Radboud University Nijmegen, 2006, 136–37; Jaap van der Veen, “Jacob Backer, een schets van zijn leven,” in *Jacob Backer (1608/9–1651)*, Peter van den Brink and Jaap van der Veen (Exh. cat. Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis; Aachen, Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum) (Zwolle, 2008), 16–17. In 1624, Lambert’s younger brother, Isaac Jacobsz Rooleeuw (ca. 1600–66), married Ytge Reiniersdr, Jacob Backer’s stepsister, with whom Backer grew up in his father’s house.
3. Hendrik Luitje Straat, “Lambert Jacobsz. Schilder,” *De Vrije Fries* 28 (1928): 57.
4. On the various relationships between Vondel and the painter’s family, see Hendrik Fredrik Wijnman, “Nieuwe gegevens omtrent de schilder Lambert Jacobsz I,” *Oud Holland* 47 (1930): 150–51. Concerning Lambert’s putative trip to Italy, see Abraham Bredius, *Kunstler-Inventare: Urkunden zur Geschichte der Holländischen Kunst des XVIIten, XVIIten und XVIIIten Jahrhunderts* (The Hague, 1921), 7: 231–34. It was long believed that Lambert visited Italy as a young artist, but this information was based on an incorrect reading of Vondel’s poem.
5. As was often the case, marriage partners were found in other cities.
6. Like Aechje Thonis, Rembrandt’s wife, Saskia Uylenburgh (1612–42), was also from the Frisian capital. This raises the question as to whether the art dealer Hendrick Uylenburgh (ca. 1587–1661), Saskia’s cousin and fellow Mennonite, as well as Jacobsz’s later business partner, had a hand in Jacobsz and Rembrandt’s meeting. While it is certain that Uylenburgh and Jacobsz maintained business relations for a long time, this professional relationship can only be dated to after 1625, the year in which Uylenburgh moved to Amsterdam. Jaap van der Veen, “Het kunstbedrijf van Hendrik Uylenburgh in Amsterdam: Productie en handel tussen 1625 en 1655,” in *Uylenburgh en Zoon. Kunst en commercie van Rembrandt tot De Lairesse 1625–1675*, Friso Lammertse and Jaap van der Veen (Exh. cat. London, Dulwich Picture Gallery; Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis) (Zwolle, 2006), 119–25, 175–84.
7. According to Houbraken, Abraham van den Tempel adopted that surname “because in the facade of the house where he lived in Leiden there was a Temple” (“om dat in de voorgevel van ‘t huis daar in hij tot Leiden woonde, een Tempel stond”). According to Wijnman, on the other hand, Lambert Jacobsz’s sons Jacob and Abraham took their name after their father’s death from their guardian, Jan Tonnis, who called himself Tempel after the name of the house he lived in Emden. Hendrik Fredrik Wijnman, “De schilder Abraham van den Tempel,” in *Uit de Kring van Rembrandt en Vondel: verzamelde studies over hun werk en leven* (Amsterdam, 1959), 49.



8. Hendrik Fredrik Wijnman, “De schilder Abraham van den Tempel,” in *Uit de Kring van Rembrandt en Vondel: verzamelde studies over hun werk en leven* (Amsterdam, 1959), 39–93.
9. Hendrik Luitje Straat, “Lambert Jacobsz. Schilder,” *De Vrije Fries* 28 (1928): 58.
10. Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (The Hague, 1718–21): 1: 126.
11. For Flinck’s apprenticeship in Leeuwarden, see Jasper Hillegers, “The Lambert Years: Govert Flinck in Leeuwarden, ca. 1629–ca. 1633,” in *Ferdinand Bol and Govert Flinck: New Research*, ed. Stephanie S. Dickey (Zwolle, 2017), 44–65.
12. Jaap van der Veen, “Jacob Backer, een schets van zijn leven,” in *Jacob Backer (1608/9–1651)*, Peter van den Brink and Jaap van der Veen (Exh. cat. Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis; Aachen, Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum) (Zwolle, 2008), 10–25.
13. The best known among these Frisian painters are Margaretha de Heer (ca. 1603–ca. 1665), Jacobus Mancadan (1602–80), and Petrus Schotanus (1601–75). See Piet Bakker, “Schilderkunst in Leeuwarden in de Gouden Eeuw: samenhang en continuïteit,” in *Cultuur in Leeuwarden in de Gouden Eeuw*, ed. Henk Oly and Geart de Vries (Hilversum, 2016), 190–97.
14. Hendrik Fredrik Wijnman, “Nieuwe gegevens omtrent de schilder Lambert Jacobsz II,” *Oud Holland* 51 (1934): 249. The marriage was only registered in Leeuwarden a few months later: HCL, DTB, 26 March 1634.
15. Hendrik Fredrik Wijnman, “De schilder Abraham van den Tempel,” in *Uit de Kring van Rembrandt en Vondel: verzamelde studies over hun werk en leven* (Amsterdam, 1959), 47–48.
16. Hendrik Luitje Straat, “Lambert Jacobsz: Schilder,” *De Vrije Fries* 28 (1925): 62–76.
17. Piet Bakker, “Gezicht op Leeuwarden: Schilders in Friesland en de markt voor schilderijen in de Gouden Eeuw” (PhD diss., Amsterdam University, 2008), 125–69; Piet Bakker, *De Friese schilderkunst in de Gouden Eeuw* (Zwolle, 2008) 113–59; and Piet Bakker, “Schilderkunst in Leeuwarden in de Gouden Eeuw,” in *Cultuur in Leeuwarden in de Gouden Eeuw*, ed. Henk Oly and Geart de Vries (Hilversum, 2016), 181–214.
18. Based on the stock he left behind in 1637, these included Jan and/or Jacob Pynas (Amsterdam), Nicolaes Moyaert (Amsterdam), Rembrandt (Leiden/Amsterdam), Jan Lievens (Leiden), Pieter de Grebber (Haarlem), Cornelis van Poelenburch (Utrecht), Abraham and/or Hendrick Bloemaert (Utrecht), and Gerrit van Honthorst (Utrecht). See Hendrik Luitje Straat, “Lambert Jacobsz: Schilder,” *De Vrije Fries* 28 (1925): 71–76.
19. Abraham Bredius, *Künstler-Inventare: Urkunden zur Geschichte der Holländischen Kunst des XVIIten, XVIIIten und XVIIIten Jahrhunderts* (The Hague, 1921), 7: 231–34; Marlite Halbertsma, “Lambert Jacobsz: Een Amsterdammer in Leeuwarden,” *De Vrije Fries* 52 (1972): 15–25; and Kurt Bauch, *Jacob Adriaensz Backer: Ein Rembrandtschüler aus Friesland* (Berlin, 1926), 90–95, 107–11.
20. Jasper Hillegers, “Lambert Jacobsz (1598–1636) en zijn werkplaats: Atelierpraktijk in Leeuwarden



omstreeks 1630,” *De Vrije Fries* 89 (2009): 67–92; and Jasper Hillegers, “The Lambert Years: Govert Flinck in Leeuwarden, ca. 1629–ca. 1633,” in *Ferdinand Bol and Govert Flinck: New Research*, ed. Stephanie S. Dickey (Zwolle, 2017), 44–65.

21. Jacob Backer, *The Tribute Money*, 1630s (Nationalmuseum, Stockholm). This work is probably the same painting that belonged to Lambert Jacobsz in 1637 and was stored by Hendrick Uylenburgh in Amsterdam. Hendrik Luitje Straat, “Lambert Jacobsz: Schilder,” *De Vrije Fries* 28 (1928): 71; Jaap van der Veen, “Het kunstbedrijf van Hendrik Uylenburgh in Amsterdam. Productie en handel tussen 1625 en 1655,” in *Uylenburgh en Zoon. Kunst en commercie van Rembrandt tot De Lairese 1625–1675*, ed. Friso Lammertse and Jaap van der Veen (Exh. cat. London, Dulwich Picture Gallery; Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis) (Zwolle 2006), 178; and Peter van den Brink and Jaap van der Veen, *Jacob Backer (1608/9–1651)* (Exh. cat. Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis; Aachen, Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum) (Zwolle, 2008), 205, no. A3.
22. Jasper Hillegers, “Lambert Jacobsz (1598–1636) en zijn werkplaats: Atelierpraktijk in Leeuwarden omstreeks 1630,” *De Vrije Fries* 89 (2009): 86.
23. Jaap van der Veen, “Het kunstbedrijf van Hendrik Uylenburgh in Amsterdam: Productie en handel tussen 1625 en 1655,” in *Uylenburgh en Zoon. Kunst en commercie van Rembrandt tot De Lairese 1625–1675*, Friso Lammertse and Jaap van der Veen (Exh. cat. London, Dulwich Picture Gallery; Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis) (Zwolle, 2006), 188–96.

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