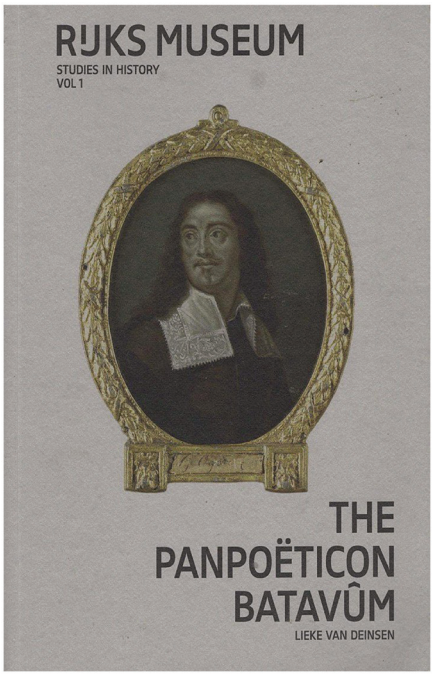
Note

Lieke van Deinsen. *The Panpoëticon Batavûm. The Portrait of the Author as a Celebrity*. Rijksmuseum Studies in History Vol. 1. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, 2016. 112 pp. ISBN 978-94-91714-94-8.



The so-called *Panpoëticon Batavûm* ('All Dutch Poets') was an eighteenth-century wooden cabinet that housed at least 350 small oval portraits of Dutch writers. The collection was started around 1700 by the Amsterdam painter Arnoud van Halen (1673-1732) and was continued by several others in the eighteenth century. While the cabinet itself has been lost in the Leiden gunpowder explosion of 1812, at least 81 portraits have survived. Some of these are now in The Rijksmuseum, 22 of them on display.[1] Lieke van Deinsen, former Johan Huizinga Fellow at the Rijksmuseum, wrote an informative and richly illustrated volume about the *Panpoëticon* for the new Rijksmuseum series *Studies in History*.

Van Deinsen is a specialist on the subject. The cabinet plays a major role in her book on canonisation mechanisms in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic, *Literaire erflaters. Canonvorming in tijden van culturele crisis (1700-1750)* (Hilversum, 2017). Together with Timothy De Paepe (University of Antwerp) she also made a digital reconstruction of the cabinet, and with Ton van Strien (em. Free University, Amsterdam) she edits the website www.schrijverskabinet.nl, with essays on the authors who were included in the *Panpoëticon*.

Containing male and female writers from the Northern and Southern Netherlands of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the *Panpoëticon* is a highlight of canon formation.

1 The book contains a list of 336 of the depicted authors and extant portraits. The search for portraits continues; suggestions can be mailed to liekevandeinsen@gmail.com.

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Part of its success was due to the public access people had to the cabinet, first in van Halen's home in Amsterdam, and later in the building of the Leiden art society *Kunst Wordt Door Arbeid Verkregen*, which bought the cabinet in 1772. The cabinet's fame was also spread by Lambert Bidloo's extensive review poem on Dutch poetry (1720) and many other laudatory poems written by visitors who had seen it. But the cultural-historical importance of the collection goes beyond visual or literary aesthetics, as Van Deinsen demonstrates. She characterizes the *Panpoëticon* as an interactive monument. With regard to the seventeenth century it was a *lieu de mémoire* that offered physical evidence of the richness of Dutch culture, facilitating a fruitful dialogue with the past. This function inspired new productivity in the eighteenth century, when especially the collector Michiel de Roode (1685-1771) was able to add significantly to the number of portraits. Living authors such as Pieter de la Ruë (1695-1770) also began to apply for incorporation, using their portrait as self-promotion. Some, such as the diplomat and poet Joan Mauricius (1692-1768) were more ambivalent about the project, and hesitant to be included, but in the end, Mauricius, too, was included, by Cornelis Troost (1696-1750).

Another aspect of the dynamics of heritage that Van Deinsen successfully illustrates is the participation of women writers. Van Halen aimed to include their portraits from the start but they remained scarce as there was no collective memory of them yet, which demonstrates the unease for the male-dominated literary establishment towards female poets at this point. Even the expert Bidloo had to admit: 'Ladies, I cannot always tell, from the countenance,//Who you are or were' ('*Jonkvrouwen* – 't lukt my niet, door 't aangezigt, te weten//Wie, of gy zyt, of waart', p. 52).

Bidloo's sigh from 1720 also reflects the initial arbitrariness of the collection. At the end of the century the Leiden art society Kunst Wordt Door Arbeid Verkregen introduced an annual vote for two new portraits. Now serious lobbying for inclusion emerged, a new stage in the creation of cultural heritage that this *Panpoëticon Batavûm* instigated.

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