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FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY AND STILL
LIFE PAINTINGS: A SINGLE SUBJECT
IN MULTIPLE WORLDS.

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INTRODUCTION

Food has been a crucial part of life since the very beginning of human existence and serves as a primary life need in order for humans to survive. However, that food is more than just a primary need for survival becomes clear when one looks to food as subject in the arts. Songs, texts, stories, drawings, sculptures, paintings and photographs are made with food as subject matter. Especially the Dutch Golden Age was a time where the subject matter of food in painting was flourishing with the famous Dutch still life paintings. This popularity of food has persisted and increased into our contemporary 21st century. In the 21st century we are constantly faced with images, and especially photographs of food. Whether we are watching television, walking in the city center, reading a magazine, looking at our smart phones or visiting galleries and museums, pictures of food are everywhere around us.

The long history of food as a subject matter in the arts, especially in painting, has already been researched elaborately by researchers from many different backgrounds, varying from art historical, to culinary historical to social historical. But these many researches have one thing in common: they are often focused on history. The link between historical depictions of food and 21st century food photography is, however, often overlooked and neglected. Only very few significant texts have been written about the subject of food in photography and how this stands in relation to the historical background of food in painting that is so elaborately researched.

Therefore, the aim of this essay is to fill in this gap in the academic field that analyzes food depiction with a comparative discourse research and visual analysis. The Dutch 17th century still life paintings will be compared to 21st century food photography. The choice for this comparison is made because food thrived as a subject matter in both eras, which means that there is a lot of material to work with to make it a fruitful comparison. In comparing the 17th century food still life paintings and 21st century food photography, insights can be gained about how the depiction of food has changed over time and how perceptions of food are altered. The research question that is sought to be answered by this comparison is how the differences in the depiction of food in 21st century food photography and 17th century Dutch 17th still life paintings played a role in how people perceived food.

In order to answer this question, this essay is divided in three chapters. The first chapter will answer the sub question of how the social developments in the Dutch 17th century are reflected in food still life paintings and if this was of influence of how Dutch people perceived foods. This chapter will thus only focus on 17th century Dutch food still life paintings and gives the information and insights that are needed to make a proper comparison to 21st century food photography. The starting point for this chapter was the book *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age* (2007) by Julie Berger Hochstrasser and her

text will be put into debate with *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (1987) by Simon Schama because there are some differences between the authors that give a fruitful debate about the social developments in the Dutch 17th century and food still life paintings. The texts will be analyzed by doing literary comparative research.

Additionally, in the second chapter, the transition from food still life painting to food photography will be made. First, the most important highlights from the history of photography regarding food photography will be discussed and after that will the relationship between the mediums of painting and photography be discussed from the point of food as subject in image making, varying from food still life painting to early food photographs to further developments as vernacular food photography on Instagram. The question that will be sought to answer in this chapter is what the differences are between food as a subject matter in painting and in photography. The most important sources that are going to be used in this chapter are the classes of art historian and photographer Jeff Curto, the text *Dutch Still Lifes and Colonial Visual Culture in the Netherlands Indies, 1800-1949* written in 2001 by Susie Protschky and *Feast for the Eyes* (2017) by Susan Bright. Curto's classes are going to be used as the base upon which other texts, like Protschky and Bright, will be added and compared to in order to provide a broad and inclusive argument.

The last chapter will briefly discuss the dark backgrounds and consequences of the topic of commercial food photography that is already introduced in chapter 2. The chapter serves as extra background information by answering the sub question what the most important dark sides of food depiction, or food marketing, are in the 21st century. In answering this question, not only academic writings will be used, of which *Broadcasting Bad Health: Why Food Marketing to Children needs to be controlled* (2003) by K. Dalmeny et al. and *Goed Eten: Filosofie van voeding en landbouw* (2018) written by Michiel Korthals are the most important, but also public campaigns, like Let's Move! by Michelle Obama and *We've #AdEnough of junk food marketing* will be taken up in answering the question. The last chapter will thus not so much do comparative literary research, but more comparative discourse research.

Finally, the research will be finished with an conclusion in which the main and the sub questions are answered, followed by the images and bibliography.

CHAPTER 1: THE EVENTS AROUND FOOD STILL LIFE PAINTING IN THE DUTCH 17TH CENTURY

1.1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the 17th century Dutch still life paintings to provide the background information that is needed to make a proper comparison to 21st century food photography. The Dutch 17th century is a time of great progress in which many developments and events happened. This chapter will seek to answer the sub question of how the social developments in the Dutch 17th century are reflected in food still life paintings and if this was of influence of how Dutch people perceived foods. The term ‘Dutch people’ is a rather broad term and for this reason it is important to mention that in this research it refers to the rich, elite layers of society in the Dutch Republic in the 17th century, since this were the people that were most likely to see the food still life paintings that are going to be discussed and were actually able to participate in the Dutch trade and buy (most of) the foodstuffs that are depicted in the food still life paintings that are going to be discussed. Additionally, the term of food still life paintings refers to still life paintings with prepared foodstuffs on laid tables. This is the reason that still life paintings that depict unprepared food, like game, are not taken into account in this research.

The most important texts that will be used to analyze the food still life paintings from the Dutch Golden Age, are *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age* (2007) by Julie Berger Hochstrasser, *Slow Food: Dutch and Flemish Meal Still Lifes 1600-1640* (2017) by Quentin Buvelot and *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* written in 1987 by art historian Simon Schama. These texts have been of great value in understanding the cultural and social circumstances of the Golden Age in the Dutch Republic and how this is reflected in food still life images. The analyzation that will be done in this chapter will consist of art historical literature research that will be deepened by also considering economic sources about the 17th century of the Dutch Republic. Visual analyzes of the works that are going to be discussed also will be covered in the research done in this chapter.

1.2: PRECURSORS OF FOOD STILL LIFE PAINTINGS

The depiction of food is not a new phenomenon that occurred in the Dutch 17th century, foodstuffs have been an inspirational source for artworks for a very long time. Images of food were already apparent in frescos and mosaics in ancient Egypt, approximately made in the 15th century BCE. These images probably served as an offering to a deceased person, so that he or she could bring the items depicted in the images to the hereafter; an example of this is the still life found in the Tomb of Menna (image 1).¹ In the Roman and Greek empire were also still life images made, mostly in mosaics and frescos as well. *Still Life with Glass Bowl of Fruit and Vases* from approximately the 1st century is such an example, which is found in Pompeii (image 2).² Despite the far-reaching history of still life images, the Dutch 17th century food still life paintings are famous worldwide, thus not because the idea itself was invented then, but because the food still life became an autonomous genre in that century. But, food as subject matter in the arts has undergone a long development before it eventually grew into an autonomous genre.

Before the emergence of the autonomous food still life paintings in the Dutch Republic in 17th century, food was often incorporated in other genres of painting. It was not unusual in the genre of, for instance, the family portrait to portray the family around a table with various foodstuffs. An example of this is *Portrait of Pieter Jan Foppesz with his Family* made in approximately 1530 by Maarten van Heemskerck where a family is depicted round a laid table with all kinds of food (image 3). Art historian Ingvar Bergström also points out in the book *Dutch still-life painting in the seventeenth century* (1956) the many instances of food as an integral element in painting, in which he mentions *The Last Supper* as one of the most famous examples in which food plays a crucial role in the scene that is depicted.³ There is, however, a discussion going on about the true origins of food still life painting.

¹ Richman-Abdou, K. (May 2018). How Artists Have Kept Still Life Painting Alive Over Thousands of Years. Retrieved on 27-06-2019 from <https://mymodernmet.com/what-is-still-life-painting-definition/>

² Idem.

³ Bergström, I. (1956). *Dutch Still Life Painting in the Seventeenth Century*. London: Faber and Faber Limited. Pp. 7, 8

1.2.1: DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE ORIGINS

Art historian Kelly Richman-Abdou argues in her article 'How Artists Have Kept Still Life Painting Alive Over Thousands of Years' (2018) that the origins of the paintings are already found in ancient Egypt society. She points to the images on the walls in tombs that show different foodstuffs, for example the earlier mentioned images in the Tomb of Menna.⁴ Another art historian, Sybille Ebert-Schifferer begins the very beginnings of food still life depiction in antiquity in her book *Still Life: A History* (1999).

Art historian Ingvar Erik Bergström is an important participant in this debate by arguing that the roots for the Dutch food still lifes in the 17th century are already visible in the 15th and 16th century.⁵ He begins by stating that the basis for the Dutch still life paintings lies in the Renaissance and the urge for naturalism that it evoked. This urge for naturalism uttered, among other things, that the range of subjects for painters broadened. The aim to depict the world as realistic as possible and see paintings as windows to the real world caused that painters saw almost all of their surroundings suitable as subject for their work. This caused that subjects like the botanical world and botanical encyclopedia grew rapidly in popularity from the Renaissance onwards. The voyage travels of the Dutch in the 17th century contributed to maintaining this popularity of depicting the natural world, including spices and foods.⁶

Quentin Buvelot allocates the beginnings of the autonomous food still life painting not to a period in time, but to a person. In the book *Slow Food: Dutch and Flemish Meal Still Lifes 1600-1640* (2017) he argues that the origins of the autonomous food began by the Amsterdam born painter Pieter Aertsen (c. 1508-1575) with his kitchen and market paintings. Multiple genres were often combined in such paintings. Ordinary everyday objects, especially foodstuffs, were the focus and therefore depicted on the foreground; other genres that were also included in these paintings, like biblical figures, were depicted in the background. The scenes were often set in kitchens or markets.

One of his most famous works is *De Vleesstal* (1551), (image 4). The content of the image consists in the foreground of a cowshed filled with all kinds of meat and game and in the background are two scenes depicted. The scene behind in the left shows the biblical story of the flight into Egypt painted where Mary is sharing her last piece of bread with the child of a scrounger and the scene behind in the right shows exuberant behavior of peasants who are

⁴ Richman-Abdou, K. (May 2018). How Artists Have Kept Still Life Painting Alive Over Thousands of Years. Retrieved on 27-06-2019 from <https://mymodernmet.com/what-is-still-life-painting-definition/>

⁵ Bergström, I. (1956). Pp. 4, 5.

⁶ Boterbloem, K. (2008). *The fiction and reality of Jan Struys : A seventeenth-century Dutch globetrotter*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 20-23.

happily enjoying the fresh meat. The colors in this painting consists of red, brown, white, yellow, green, black and the saturation of the colors is very high in the foreground and becomes slightly lesser towards the scenes in the background, especially the scene of the feasting peasants. Then, the value of the colors used in this painting is again very high in the background, since a lot of white is used in the foreground. The value of the colors becomes lower towards the background because the colors are more combined with black, like the backwall of the cowshed.

The light in the painting comes from the front and from above, considering that the objects do not have much shadows. The foreground, as well as both the scenes in the background, are lit from natural daylight. This can be seen from the rooftop at the upper right in the painting, which makes it clear that the meats are stage half-outside. The biblical scene is completely staged outside and the scene of the feasting peasants is staged in a fairly open room, which is therefore also painted as lit from natural sunlight.

The meats in the foreground are placed close together and are connected with each other because of the same hues and values of colors. The biblical scene in the background clearly stands apart from the foreground, not only in its content but also in the color use. More greens and browns and greys are used in the biblical scene, setting it apart from the foreground and the feasting peasants. The scene of the feasting peasants is also set apart by the use of much more darkness and shadows in comparison to the overall feel of the painting.⁷

Aertsen was one of the firsts that made paintings with food as main focus point in the foreground and additional scenes in the background. This was very innovative at the time because the depiction of food as main subject was not considered as 'real' art in the period that he made it.⁸

When overviewing all the different starting points of the origins of still life painting by various authors, one could argue that food, an essential part of human existence, has been an artistic interest for a very long period of time. I do not want to argue that some of the above mentioned authors have a 'wrong' starting point in their argument, but I do want to reason that some of the arguments are weaker when it comes to the origins of 17th century still life paintings. For instance, the examples that are mentioned by Richman-Abdou could not have

⁷ The source used for all the visual analyzes made in this research is: Gillian, R. (2013). *Visual Methodologies*. In G. Griffin (Ed), *Research Methods of English Studies* (second edition, pp. 69-92). Edinburgh.

⁸ Buvelot, Q. et. al. (2017). *Slow food : Dutch and Flemish meal still lifes, 1600-1640*. Mauritshuis. Pp. 52, 53

influenced the Dutch still life genre directly; since the images from the Tomb of Menna, the examples that she mentioned, were not discovered until the late 19th and early 20th century.⁹ However, the examples discussed by Buvelot show prominent similarities with the 17th century food still lifes. Therefore I want to propose that it is more likely that the direct origins of the autonomous 17th century food still life paintings are laid in the 16th century rather than in ancient Egypt or in Antiquity. Accordingly, the 16th century will also in this essay be seen as the era in which the true origins of 17th century food still life paintings are laid.

The origins of the autonomous still life painting genre already had a low prestige in the 16th century. This is because painting genres were seen in a hierarchical order. Historical painting was the genre with the most prestige of all the painting genres because this genre was regarded as much more difficult to make and more challenging on an intellectual level. The reason for this is because historical paintings showed biblical, mythical and/ or historical scenes, with multiple figures and this was regarded as much more complex than the depiction of inanimate things of the still life paintings, which is why still life painting had a low status.¹⁰

Nevertheless, Aertsen was followed by many painters because the subject of food in painting became very popular, likely because of the lifelike character of the scenes depicted, which was regarded as an important and interesting characteristic of painting and skill of the artist since the Renaissance. Another explanation for the popularity is that still lifes were considered more as decorative than as high art, which could be why people were so fond of it.¹¹

Pieter Aertsen's first follower was his nephew Joachim Beuckelaer (c. 1533-c.1574), who lived and worked his entire life in Antwerp. Soon after, many renowned and often very successful painters within the historical painting genre also started making kitchen and market pieces, like Joachim Wtewael (1566-1638) and Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem (1562-1638). They saw opportunities to show off their artistic skill in these paintings because of the wide variety of objects with all sorts of different textures and materials.

The popularity of the kitchen and market paintings was first picked up in Antwerp, where Aertsen worked a substantial part of his life and he was during that time the tutor of Beuckelaer. The subgenre was thus first introduced in Antwerp, but the Fall of Antwerp in 1585 caused that thousands of people fled to the Dutch Republic. This not only gave an

⁹ Osirisnet, (n.d.), *TT69, the Tomb of Menna*. Retrieved on 12-07-2019 from https://www.osirisnet.net/tombes/nobles/menna69/e_menna_01.htm

¹⁰ Schneider, N. (2003). *Still Life*. Taschen GmbH.. Retrieved on 6-6-2019 from <https://books.google.nl/books?hl=nl&lr=&id=P3P2nZyj1PQC&oi=fnd&pg=PA7&dq=beginnings+of+still+life+painting&ots=4ewBUGvWWB&sig=w4s1UDCdmCivs4om8XY8oBDNFM#v=snippet&q=origins&f=false> P. 7.

¹¹ Mahon, D. (1993-1994). A New Look at a Seventeenth-Century Dutch Still Life. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*. Vol. 51(3). P. 33. Retrieved on 11-07-2019 from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3258775.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A7a1b4ed795275b71619a5db186ado4do>

immense impulse to the Dutch economy, but also to Dutch culture and was an essential event for the birth of the Dutch Golden Age. All these immigrants brought their ideas with them to the Dutch Republic. This development led to food increasingly becoming more popular as main subject in painting in the Northern Netherlands as well.¹²

The famous Dutch master Floris van Dijck (1575-1651) was the pioneer of the meal still life genre in Haarlem. When his meal still lifes are compared to various kitchen pieces, elements of the kitchen pieces are used in his autonomous meal still lifes. An example of this are the stacked cheeses in *Kitchen Piece with a Maid and a Buffoon* (c.1600) made by the studio of the Dutch painter Joachim Wtewael (1566-1638) that are also depicted in many of Van Dijck's meal still lifes.

1.3: EARLY 17TH CENTURY FOOD STILL LIFE PAINTINGS

It was not until the very end of the 16th century and throughout the 17th century that paintings only showed inanimate objects. The biblical and mythological scenes in the earlier mentioned kitchen and market pieces disappeared entirely and the complete focus was laid on the food. One could argue that the emergence of a new painting genre could have caused a change in how the viewers perceived these still life paintings. Before this possible change in perception is discussed more in depth, it should be explicitly mentioned that we – in the 21st century – are not able to precisely track down how still life paintings were interpreted by its 17th century viewers; nonetheless, many art historians have attempted to bring clarity to this topic by many different theories about how the (food) still life paintings should be interpreted and how these works were seen by the 17th century perceiver.

The first possible sources for interpretation of paintings were already written in the 17th century itself: emblem books. *Sinnepoppen* (1614) is an example of such an emblem book written by the Dutch writer and merchant Roemer Visscher. This book, and most likely most other emblem books, was based on the principle of “*tot nut en vermaak*”, or in Latin “*miscere utile dulci*”, which meant the combination of the useful with the pleasant.¹³ Emblem books did combine the useful with the pleasant since they included text and images that were intended to teach the reader a lesson in a rather playful manner. These ‘lessons’ regarded

¹² Price, J. (1974). *Culture and society in the Dutch Republic during the 17th century*. London: Batsford. Pp. 20, 21.

¹³ Onze Taal, (n.d.), *Ter leering ende vermaeck*. Retrieved on 12-07-2019 from <https://onzetaal.nl/taaladvies/ter-leering-ende-vermaeck/>

subjects as marital fidelity or temperance. Emblem books were very popular in the 16th and 17th century, mostly among scholars, but were also of influence on poetry and painting.¹⁴

Allegory of Painting by the Leiden painter Jacob Toorenvliet is one example of how emblems were an inspirational source for painters (image 5). This copying of emblem subjects to painting is the foundation for a thriving art historical debate regarding how exactly paintings should be perceived and interpreted. This debate is often pointed to 17th century Dutch paintings, because these paintings are thought to contain much symbolic meaning, which is again also much refuted. Despite that the debate regards 17th century paintings, the discussion reached its peak not until the 20th century.

Beginning with art critic Théophile Thoré-Bürger (1807-1869) and his work *Les Musées de la Hollande* (1858), which he wrote under the pseudo name of Willem Bürger, which is one of the earlier texts in this art historical debate. In the second volume of this book, Thoré states that Dutch art is a sort of copy of reality, because it shows in such a realistic manner the way of living of the 17th century.¹⁵ “Bürger saw the Dutch 17th century paintings as the true form of realism because they show life as it was, without romanticizing it.

Bürgers view is in great contrast with the book *Zinne- en Minnebeelden* (1967) by art historian Eddy de Jongh more than a century later. The argument of De Jongh is considerably different than that of Thoré. Where Thoré saw the 17th century Dutch paintings as a representation of real life, De Jongh had a whole other view regarding these paintings. He argues that 17th century paintings contain a deeper and hidden meaning and in order to understand these hidden meanings, he uses emblem books that give explanations about what is depicted. De Jongh points also to Roemer Visscher’s *Sinnepoppen* (1614) and even makes the, rather broad, conclusion that this text is representative for all the opinions about paintings in entire 17th century, because the book was written in the 17th century itself.¹⁶

Besides, according to De Jongh additional studies of Dutch literature, the apparent value of emblematic elements in Dutch 17th century thinking about literature and painting is confirmed. This was a break with the conventional thoughts of Dutch painting from the Golden Age as realistic depictions. The later exhibition and accompanying catalogue *Tot Lering en Vermaak* (1976) in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam caused again a stir, because De Jongh made iconographic descriptions of every art work in the exhibition in which he claimed that every work had a deeper meaning and that the ingenuity of the painters was at the service of the moral lesson of the painting. Despite that no food still lifes are included in

¹⁴ Universiteit Utrecht, (n.d.). Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht: Emblemata. Retrieved on 12-07-2019 from <http://bc.library.uu.nl/emblemata.html>

¹⁵ Bürger, W. (1858), *Les Musées de la Hollande*, Vol. 1. P. 323. Retrieved on 14-07-2019 from https://archive.org/details/gri_museesdelahoothor/page/n9

¹⁶ De Jongh, E. (1976). *Tot Lering en Vermaak*. Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam. P. 285

this catalogue, there is a market piece incorporated of Joachim Wttewael, *De Groentevrouw*. That De Jongh both uses emblem books and Dutch literature to describe this work is best exemplified by the following quote:

“Het meisje houdt demonstratief een appel met een rotte plek omhoog en kijkt daarbij naar haar moeder, een tamelijk natuurlijke handeling die echter een diepere grond lijkt te hebben. Het tonen van de aangetaste vrucht beeldt een spreekwoord uit dat tot op de dag van vandaag onveranderd is blijven voortleven: ‘Eén rotte appel in de mand maakt al het gave fruit te schand.’”¹⁷

This distortion in looking and analyzing art caused of course a lot of reactions and critique. One of the most apparent and important critiques on De Jongh is made by art historian Svetlana Alpers in her book *The Art of Describing* (1983). She has a fierce critique to De Jongh in particular and states that the pleasure of looking at a painting is always the most important aim of painting and that one cannot make an intellectual exercise of looking at a painting, because that was never the aim of the painter. She agrees with De Jongh at the standpoint that paintings are a result of the period in time they were made in, but the paintings are not supposed to be looked at from the point of a moral lesson. She emphasizes that paintings belong to the visual culture of a country and not to the literary culture. The 17th century public, in which Alpers refers to the bourgeois of the Republic, was fascinated by the visual representations of the world around them and the life like character of the paintings.¹⁸

Peter Hecht propose additionally a totally different theory in comparison to all the above mentioned authors in his book *The Debate on Symbol and Meaning in Dutch Seventeenth-Century Art: An Appeal to Common Sense* (1986).¹⁹ In this book he states that our interpretation and perception of Dutch 17th century paintings are blurred by misinterpretations that are constructed through time. Despite that the earlier mentioned authors in this debate, like Thoré, De Jongh and Alpers, had different arguments, Hecht refutes most of them by stating that the 20th century viewer cannot know the true meaning and message of a Dutch 17th century painting, since its true meaning is blurred by the many constructions and misinterpretations that were developed and changed over time. In fact, Hecht sees great value in these constant changes in interpretations and ideas about artworks, since that truly shows the time spirit and reflect cultural changes. Hecht speaks of a

¹⁷ De Jongh, E. (1976). *Tot Lering en Vermaak*. Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam. P. 291

¹⁸ Boers, M. (2012). *Svetlana Alpers: The art of describing. Dutch art in the seventeenth century*. Retrieved on 15-07-2019 from https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/nee005201201_01/nee005201201_01_0032.php

¹⁹ The critiques on Alpers are of course far more than the critiques that are mentioned in this essay. However, it is a conscious decision to only discuss a few critiques on Alpers since a whole disquisition of the critiques on Alpers would be too far removed from answering the sub question of this chapter.

‘confusion about realism in Dutch art’ since viewers of later time periods are not able to precisely know what the original meaning of an artwork might have been, since he states that each art work has a life of its own and that it delivers a different message to viewers in different times.²⁰

In short Hecht thus argues that the same artwork is differently perceived in different eras and that it can thus have various meanings to the viewer over the course of time. This statement thus totally refutes the theory of Thoré of the ultimate reality of everyday life in the Dutch 17th century. Despite that there is a similarity between the theories of Hecht, De Jongh and Alpers regarding that they all think that an artwork is a product of the time that it is made in, Hecht is the only one that does not try to propose a way the 17th century artworks are supposed to be looked at. Instead, Hecht proposes that we should focus on the different ways 17th century paintings have been looked at and how this gives massive insights in cultural changes and developments.²¹

Historian Simon Schama is also particularly interested in getting insights into life in the 17th century Dutch Republic in his book *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*, written in 1987. Where Hecht is interested in getting insights in cultural developments since the 17th century by looking at the changing perceptions to artworks, Schama researches more in a historical than in an art historical manner in order to get insights into the 17th century Golden Age. Schama takes in a position in the middle of the arguments that are discussed thus far. He agrees with Hecht in that the meaning of still life paintings cannot always be certain to viewers of later centuries since the original meaning can be replaced by other conceptions and interpretations over time. However, Schama also partially agrees with De Jongh in the iconographic explanation of paintings. I say ‘partially’ because he states that there certainly is an iconographical program in *vanitas* paintings, because they make up a coherent whole, but he dismisses that there is an iconographical program in all still life paintings, because there simply is no evidence that still life painters always intended to do so. However, it is important to make clear that Schama does not deny that iconographical intentions are possible, but that there simply is an unjustified overkill on such interpretations. In order to strengthen his argument, Schama refers to the example of *Christelijke Self-Strijt* of Jacob Cats in which a butter churn stands for the contradiction for the body and the soul²². He also refers to the earlier mentioned *Sinnepoppen* of Roemer Visscher for the example of overripe fruit which stands for the moral lesson of ‘early ripe, early rot’, which was a moral warning against precocity.²³

²⁰ Hecht, P. (1986). The Debate on Symbol and Meaning in Dutch Seventeenth-Century Art: An Appeal to Common Sense. *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, Vol.16(2/3). Pp. 173-175.

²¹ Idem.

²² Schama, S. (1987). *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*. London: Harper Collins Publishers. P. 163

²³ Idem.

It is striking that Schama appoints early Dutch still life paintings, with special attention to *banketstukken*, as simple and easy. It is likely that he refers to the simple compositions and color palettes of food still lifes of the early 17th century, which were indeed quite simple. He states that the Dutch were resourceful in creating much from little, hereby referring to compositions consisting of foodstuffs like herring, lemons, bread, cheese, nuts and fruit.²⁴ These simpler looking paintings stood in contrast to the later *pronkstillevens*, with which Schama makes a comparison. However, Schama's statement that early food still life paintings are simple may be true in compositional terms, but these early 17th century still lifes are discussed more in depth by others to make clear that these paintings are not as easy and simple as they might seem. One of the most important works that exemplify the rather complex history and backgrounds of food still life paintings is *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age* (2007) written by art historian Julie Berger Hochstrasser.

1.4: THE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE DUTCH TRADE

Hochstrasser discusses the correlation between the Dutch trade and the differences in depiction of food in 17th century still life paintings in her book *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age* (2007). The last sentence of her introduction "*As will become abundantly clear in the course of this study, the representations of commodities rendered so very richly visible in the paintings of laid tables of the Dutch Golden Age both withhold and yet also reveal a great deal more than meets the eye*" makes clear that she researched the backgrounds of food still life paintings.²⁵

She does this not in an iconographical way, which searches for more than meets the eye by looking for deeper meanings, but in a historical way in which she pays no attention to the iconographical approach. She thereby distances herself from De Jongh. In fact, she distances herself a bit from every author that is mentioned above, since she does not want to propose a way in which the paintings should be interpreted, nor is she specifically interested in the changed perceptions of the artworks and what that tells us about cultural developments. Instead, she focusses on the provenance of the foodstuffs and commodities of food still life paintings and analyzes the developments of the Dutch trade to make clear how and when the products became available in The Netherlands. She then links this information back to the economic and social circumstances and developments in The Netherlands in the 17th century. She wants to clarify the, sometimes dark, background that lay behind the

²⁴ A few famous painters of early 17th century food still life paintings were Pieter Claesz. and Willem Heda.

²⁵ Hochstrasser, Berger, J. (2007). *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. P. 10.

splendor of food still life paintings from the Dutch Golden Age and thereby enlarge our historical understanding of the works. She hereby adds a new perception to the debate of how food still life paintings can be seen and researched.²⁶ In analyzing the history of the comestibles of Dutch 17th century food still life paintings and additionally shed light on how people perceived certain foods, Hochstrasser serves as an important point of departure for this essay and will therefore be discussed more elaborately.

Hochstrasser begins her argument with early 17th century food still life paintings, which often show foodstuffs like cheeses, bread, herring, butter and beer. The reason that these specific commodities were often depicted in the early still lifes is because these commodities were products that were often produced locally. Hochstrasser sees the paintings as reflections of the Dutch trade at that moment. It is remarkable that Schama explicitly mentions the depiction of lemons in early still lifes and that Hochstrasser does not mention these fruits until a little later into the 17th century. In order to understand this difference, I want to follow the structure of the text of Hochstrasser, since she discusses the developing Dutch trade step-by-step, in contrast to Schama, who speaks of these early food still life much less in detail.

First, the locally produced products are discussed by Hochstrasser, which she categorized in the subparagraphs 'cheese', 'herring' and 'beer'. She hereby also discusses how the Dutch perceived these foods. Beginning with 'cheese', Hochstrasser mentions historian Arie Theodorus van Deursen's book *Plain Lives in a Golden Age: Popular Culture, Religion and Society in Seventeenth-Century Holland* (1991), where he states that the income of a regular craftsman was not enough to live off and that the wife and children also had to work to provide income to be able to buy enough food at all.²⁷ Hochstrasser uses this information to build her argument on, together with the old Dutch saying *zuivel op zuivel is voer voor de duivel*²⁸ (dairy on dairy is food for the devil), which is still used today in the Dutch language. Based on this information, Hochstrasser claims that cheese was more of a luxurious comestible and that it was not obvious that everybody of every class of Dutch society ate cheese on a regular basis. Additionally, she also states that it was not common to eat both butter and cheese at the same time, hence the dairy on dairy is food for the devil adage. It was more accepted in the higher classes of society to eat both butter and cheese together. An well-known example of this is that stadholder Maurits van Oranje loved to eat his bread with

²⁶ Hochstrasser, Berger, J. (2007). *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

²⁷ Deursen, A. T. (1991). *Plain Lives in a Golden Age: Popular Culture, Religion and Society in Seventeenth-Century Holland*. Cambridge University Press. Pp. 46.

²⁸ This saying originated in the Middle Ages where people who made abundant use of dairy were accused of witchcraft, later the phrase was used to label excessive consumption of dairy as sinful. In this later connotation, the Calvinist foundation of the Dutch society is clearly visible. For more information read: Vermeulen, M. (2013). *Zuivel op zuivel is voer voor de duivel: recepten uit de tweede wereldoorlog*. Amsterdam: Schrijverspunt.

both butter and cheese. This statement strengthens her argument that common people had a very basic and simple diet, of which cheese and butter were not a (regular) part.²⁹

Secondly, herring. Hochstrasser states that this comestible was not only an important aspect of the Dutch economy in terms of employment opportunities and export, but that it was also a crucial part of the Dutch diet, in which only the rich ate herring more than two times a week, but that also the middling class was happy to spend their money on herring. She states that this popularity in the Dutch diet and the important role of herring for the Dutch employment and export is the reason that herring was such a popular subject in early food still lifes.

Thus far, Hochstrasser states that cheese was part of the Dutch diet, but mainly for the rich classes and to a lesser extent for the lower layers of society. Herring was according to Hochstrasser an easily accessible food for a big part of society. However, Schama wrote about the history of dietary laws and the purchasing power of the Dutch middling class in the 17th century, claiming that both cheese and herring were levelers in the Dutch diet. By this, he means that both cheese and herring caused “*universal enjoyment of which dissolved rank within national identity*”.³⁰ He does not go further in depth on how and why these comestibles were exactly the levelers of the Dutch diet, except that herring and cheese were both cheap and thus accessible to large groups of society. Additionally, he does affirm that both cheese and butter together was considered as not done, due to the notion of *overvloed* (abundance) which was disapproved.³¹

Thirdly, the comestible of bread is elaborately discussed by Hochstrasser. Despite that bread and products like *krakelingen* (pretzels) were considered as typical and important parts of the Dutch diet, the grain that was needed to make bread came from the Baltic region. Just like herring and cheese, bread was also a popular subject in paintings. An example of this is the recurring topic of *The Baker Blowing his Horn* of which many variations are made, varying from Adriaen van Ostade (1610-1685) (image 6, 7 and 8), Jan Steen (1626-1679) (image 9), Gabriël Metsu (1629-1667) (image 10) to Job Berckheyde (1630-1693) (image 11). Despite that these are not still lifes, the often used topic of the baker blowing his horn indicates the popularity of the subject of bread in the Dutch Republic. Hochstrasser claims that this is due to the pride of the nation of these domestically made bread products, despite the fact that the ingredient to make these products were imported from the Baltic. In addition to this argument, Hochstrasser points out to the often prominent positions of bread in still life compositions, as is also the case in Pieter Claesz *Still Life with Cheese, Herring and*

²⁹ Vermeulen, M. (2013). *Zuivel op zuivel is voer voor de duivel: recepten uit de tweede wereldoorlog*. Amsterdam: Schrijverspunt. P. 8.

³⁰ Schama, S. (1987). P. 163

³¹ Idem.

Smoking Implements, where the bread is placed in the middle of the scene (and herring is also an prominent part of the composition).³²

Then, Hochstrasser makes the distinction between these domestically made foodstuffs and commodities that were obtained from other parts of Europe, wherein she discusses lemons, which Schama named as a common part of the simple early food still lifes.

Hochstrasser's discussion of lemons does not deny Schama's point, since she too says that lemons are an essential part in most food still lifes of the 17th century, including the early ones with the more simpler compositions. Regarding this point, Hochstrasser's argument can be seen as a compliment to Schama by providing the topic with background information, which enlarges our understanding about these 'simple' lemons.

Already in the first lines of the paragraph, Hochstrasser makes clear that lemon; together with oranges, olives or raisins; were to be imported from the Mediterranean and that makes it all the more striking that lemons were such a prominent part of (early) food still lifes in the Dutch Republic. In the course of time the focus on domestically produced products shifted to imported products from other countries. Important events with regard to the opportunities of the Dutch trade to grow further with the stop of the embargo that Spain put on the trade of the Dutch with the Mediterranean and the East in 1589 and the truce period of twelve years of the Eighty Years War with Spain in 1609. The Dutch then got the opportunity to develop their trade networks not only with these regions, but later also with other parts of Europe and regions overseas.³³

One could think that this grow of the Dutch trade could be the reason for the many citruses found in still lifes. Despite that they were more available, they were not an integral part of the Dutch diet, it was at most an occasionally addition to the diet of the riches.³⁴ But why were foodstuffs like lemons such a popular subject in Dutch still lifes when they were not eaten as much? Hochstrasser appoints this to the desire to show of the pride of the trade of the nation.

This pride of the nation continued growing in the 17th century, because of the establishment of the VOC (Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie) in 1602 and the WIC (West-Indische Compagnie) in 1621. The commodities and comestibles that were imported by the VOC brought a lot of welfare to the Republic. One of the most important import products of the VOC were spices.³⁵ Historian Jonathan Israel even states that it was the spice (and

³² Hochstrasser Berger J. (2007). Pp. 61-69.

³³ Kuipers, J. J. B. (2014). *De VOC: Een Multinational onder Zeil, 1602-1799*. Zutphen: Walburg Pers. Pp. 20 - 23

³⁴ Hochstrasser Berger J. (2007). P. 74

³⁵ Prior to the emergence of the VOC, the Portuguese had the monopoly of the spice trade. When the Portuguese were occupied by the Spanish in 1580, the Dutch felt that they had to explore an independent spice trade for themselves, since the Dutch were in war with the Spanish. This made the trade between the Dutch and the Portuguese problematic. For more information, read: Kuipers, J. J. B. (2014). *De VOC: Een Multinational onder Zeil, 1602-1799*.

especially pepper) trade that caused the success and prosperity of the Golden Age.³⁶ This statement is in contrast to historian Fernand Braudel, who stated that the prosperity of the Golden Ages began with the ‘mother trade’, by which he meant the grain trade with the Baltic.³⁷ Despite that the grain trade with the Baltic can be seen as the most important trade network before the VOC was founded, hence the name ‘mother trade’, it cannot be denied that the spice trade was the first international trade for the Dutch that was very prosperous for the economic status of the nation. Because of the predominant position in the international spice trade that the Dutch took over from the Portuguese, Amsterdam grew out to be the main entry port in Europe from which the spices were further distributed to the rest of the Low Countries and Europe.

The Dutch were thus a new player on the field of international trade with the spice trade. This does, however, not mean that spices were completely new to the Low Countries. Jan Kuipers wrote in one of the first paragraphs of this book *De VOC: een multinational onder zeil, 1602-1799* that spices were already in Antiquity much in demand, not only for culinary used, but it was believed that they also conveyed medical healing properties.³⁸ This information is not mentioned by Hochstrasser and she thus focusses entirely on the trade routes and traded goods of the 17th century.

In the 17th century, spices did not have the meaning anymore of healing medicines, but it was much in demand due to the culinary interest. Besides, the high prices of spices made it in the beginning of the 17th century only available for the very rich, which made spices also a commodity of prestige. The Dutch term *peperduur* (expensive like pepper, which in popular speech means ‘very expensive’), which is still used in the Dutch language, reflects this prestige of pepper.

For a complete picture of the VOC and thus the Dutch trade it is important to mention that spices were one of the most important reasons for Dutch colonization. Spices had to be obtained from regions overseas, of which Indonesia was one of the most important areas where spices were imported from. First, Java was particularly interesting for the Dutch as trading area since the Portuguese, the former authority of the international spice trade, were not active in that area.³⁹ Batavia, current Jakarta, was founded by the controversial VOC Governor-General Jan Pietersz Coen of Hoorn and served as the first foothold for the Dutch spice trade in the East.⁴⁰

³⁶ Israel, I. J. (1989) *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc. P. 414.

³⁷ Braudel, F. (1981). *Civilization and capitalism, 15th-18th century*. New York: Harper & Row. P. 30.

³⁸ Kuipers, J. J. B. (2014). Pp. 20, 21

³⁹ Hochstrasser Berger J. (2007). Pp. 102, 103

⁴⁰ Pietersz Coen is a very controversial historical figure because he was of great value of the flourishing of the VOC and brought much welfare to the Republic. His strategies to achieve this, however, were very brutal and inhuman, but were also admitted by the home country. An example of Coen’s actions are the events on the Banda Islands: Instead of negotiating the amount of traded goods

Hochstrasser does discuss the dark side of the trade more extensively in her book than Schama does, however, Schama accounts something rather important about the spice trade that Hochstrasser lacks in her argument. Schama point to the perception of the newly imported goods in the Republic. Where Hochstrasser does point to the dark backgrounds of how these goods were acquired, she only discusses how the goods were implemented into the Dutch diet and how the goods were distributed from Amsterdam to the rest of Europe. While the way in which goods were implemented into the Dutch diet already say a lot about how the foods were perceived by the Dutch population, although it often only regarded the top layers of society that got access to the new products, Hochstrasser makes it appear in her argument that all the new foodstuffs were only positively received by the public.

Despite that Schama does go much less in depth specifically on the subject of the Dutch trade, he does address that the new exotic goods were not only received with grace, but also with distrust. He states that moralists, and especially Calvinist preachers, saw the newly imported foodstuffs as dangerous. This distrust particularly regarded spices with heavy scent and grown by pagans on the other side of the world, for they could deceive men into the abandonment of home cooking and a pure morality. Sauces that were made with these spices were seen as the ruining of honest dishes of meat and vegetables, according to the moralists and Calvinists preachers.⁴¹ This account of distrust towards new exotic comestibles in the Low Countries in the 17th century is, however, a statement that is not often made within the discourse. Many texts about the history of Dutch (spice) trade in the Golden Age, including Hochstrasser, discuss the developments of the trade itself and which commodities were imported because of this flourishing trade.⁴² Schama is thus rather striking in the discourse of the society of the Dutch Republic in the 17th century and the development of the flourishing Dutch (spice) trade.

with the inhabitants of Indonesia, Coen gave orders to deport the indigenous people as slaves, starve them to death or slaughter them. This one example already shows the way the Dutch forced themselves on countries they wanted to operated their trade from. Therefore the flourishing Dutch trade also meant (brutal) colonization on the other side of the world, beginning with the flourishing spice trade of the VOC and later also in the slave and sugar trade of the WIC in the West. This short footnote is of course not adequate to do justice to the whole history of the violence of the Dutch. It is, however, not the aim to go very much in depth into this discourse in this essay. This footnote serves as means of providing the historical information of violence of the VOC that is very important, but to a lesser extent in answering the research question of this essay. For more information: Boxer, C. R. (1965). *The Dutch Seaborne Empire 1600-1800*. London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd.

⁴¹ Schama, S. (1987). Pp. 165, 166

⁴² Examples of texts about the history of society of the Dutch Republic in the 17th century or the Dutch spice trade are *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants and Intoxicants* (1992) by Wolfgang Schivelbusch; *From Spice to Tea: on consumer choice and the justification of value in the early modern Low Countries* (2019) by Wouter Ryckbosch; *Culture of Society in the Dutch Republic during the 17th century* (1974) by J. L. Price. Neither of these texts discuss the perception of new exotic comestibles that were imported. They only discuss the developments of the flourishing trade and how this resulted in the introduction of new foodstuffs in Europe to which layers of society, but neither of the texts mention any distrust against these exotic products.

Whether the spices were regarded with distrust or not, when looking at food still life paintings of the period, it is notable that spices, and especially pepper, were a recurrent subject. One of the first paintings to depict pepper was made in 1622 by Floris van Dijck in the work *Still Life with Cheeses* (image 12). The scene of this painting consists of a laid table with all kinds of (exotic) comestibles and commodities placed on top, pictured against a dark background color. On the plate in the foreground, a paper cone filled with peppercorns.

The main colors used in this work are white, red, yellow, green, blue and black. The saturation of the colors in the foreground and middle ground are quite high, but becomes more low towards the black background. The same goes for the value of the colors. The value is high in the front and middle of the tabletop because a lot of white and highlights are added to the objects. The value is low in objects on the far end of the table and in the background itself. The source of light comes from the top, considering the shadows of the objects on the table. The exact light source cannot be seen from the painting, therefore the exact light source remains unknown in this painting.⁴³

In first instance, the objects seem scattered around on the table, but when looking at the placing of certain objects, there are some striking things. The stack of cheese in the middle, the plate of apples on the left and the citrons more on the front and right side of the painting have the same hues of color and therefore form an invisible triangle in the composition. The same goes for the greens and blues more towards the end on the right side of the tabletop. For visual additions to this explanation, see image 13.

Despite that the plate with the slice of melon and the peppercorns falls outside both triangles, the plate does catch the viewers' attention since it balances on the edge of the table. Hochstrasser argues that this is a conscious choice of the painter, since it serves as an invitation to the viewer to join the feast on the table. The same goes for the spiraling peel that hangs over the edge of the table as well.⁴⁴

Next to this depiction of pepper by Van Schooten, were various other painters who painted the spice regularly; Pieter Claesz depicted the ingredient of pepper in the form of a sauce in his work *Herring with Glass of Beer and a Roll*, made in 1636 (image 14) and Willem Kalf placed a paper corn of pepper in the middle of the composition in *Still Life with Pepper and Porcelain*, made in the 1660's.

⁴³ It is, also because of the dark background, likely that the table is set inside. However, the possibilities for inside lighting were very limited during the time the painting was made, since electricity was not invented until the 19th century. The amount of light in the scene cannot come from a lit candle, this is the reason that the light source remains unknown for this painting, since any statement about this can merely be speculation.

⁴⁴ Hochstrasser Berger J. (2007). Pp. 97-99.

1.5: FOOD STILL LIFES LATER IN THE 17TH CENTURY

Spices were not the only merchandise that the VOC traded in, they also traded porcelain and tea.⁴⁵ The Dutch inhabitants of Batavia began the habit of tea drinking and when they returned back to the motherland, they took this habit with them, but this was not until the end of the 17th century.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, the first record of a shipment of tea dates already from 1610, but tea was for the most part of the 17th century regarded as a curiosity rather than a new addition to the diet and social habits.⁴⁷ In the 17th century, tea was thus of little importance for the trade, in social life or in art, this did not happen until the very end of the 17th century, extending into the 18th century. This is the reason that the subject of tea will only be very briefly discussed in this argument.⁴⁸

The VOC is seen as the most important factor in the flourishing trade and welfare of the Golden Age for the Dutch. However, the WIC also played a significant role in the Dutch trade. One of the most important goods that was imported by the WIC was salt. Salt was regarded as an luxurious product with prestige by the 17th century public and this already becomes clear when one looks at the elaborate saltcellars that are seen in many 17th century still lifes. A few examples of this are Floris van Schooten's *Still Life with Butter and Cheeses* (image 16), where a saltcellar is depicted towards the back of the table, but it nevertheless has a quite prominent position in the composition, directly next to the prominent stack of cheeses on the right side of the composition. This design of saltcellar was often used by the Haarlem painters in the first decades of the 17th century. A more elaborate saltcellar is shown in Pieter Claesz's *Still Life with Roemer, Oysters and Saltcellar* (image 17). This saltcellar has an even more prominent place in the composition, directly next to the prominent roemer on the left, just behind the centrally positioned plate with oysters that is placed at the very edge of the table. The prominent position is also partly due to the fewer objects that are depicted in the

⁴⁵ Porcelain was also a very important part of the traded goods of the VOC but this will not be discussed here since it is no food.

⁴⁶ Despite that in the 21st century the British culture is known for their love of tea, it were the Dutch who brought the drinking of tea to Europe.

⁴⁷ This term refers to items like tea pots, tea leaves and cups and saucers.

⁴⁸ Most of the 17th century paintings that depict tea at all are made by the Dutch painter Pieter van Roestraeten, of which *Een Yixing theepot, porseleinen kopjes, suikerpot en een schotel op een gedeeltelijk met een rood beklede tafel* (A Yixing teapot, Chinese porcelain cups, a sugar pot and a bowl on a partly draped table) (image 15) is one of the examples. This painting shows a lot of porcelain like Chinese cups and saucers, the tea itself and kandij, or sugar. Tea was thus seen as an exclusive foodstuff and was therefore also peaking in its exclusive value in the end of the 17th century. The popularity of tea towards the end of the 17th century grew to such an extent in the 18th century, that this resulted in the 18th century that tea was drunk by everyone, including the poorest of society, which meant that tea was no longer seen as a curiosity and had a great loss of status.

painting. These are just two examples of the many designs of saltcellars that were available, which refers to the demand of saltcellars and thus the importance of salt in the Dutch diet.⁴⁹

Salt was not only added to meals consumed at the table, but was essential in nationally produced products like salted herring and was therefore essential for the VOC because salt was used to preserve food, which was important for long-distance voyages. Hochstrasser points out to the importance of salt in the 17th century by quoting Jacob Cats from the book *Schat der Gesontheyt*, but one has to be critical about this quotation of Hochstrasser.⁵⁰ Firstly, because it is a translation and secondly because she took it out of its context by quoting it in her argument, by which it lost its further meaning. Looking at the original Old-Dutch text one can indeed read “*Dies kanmen beter gout, als zout op aerden missen*”, which is the original sentence of the translated quote of Hochstrasser.⁵¹ However, when one reads further, the next sentence says “*Maer hier en over-al soo dient de middlemaet, Want Alsmen die vergeet, soo wort het goede quaet.*”.⁵² This points to the importance of moderation in salt use, because a little is good, but too much turns this good into bad. This perception of salt is still the same in the 21st century where we still think that a little bit of salt is good, but too much salt is bad for you. This shows the Calvinist background of which moderation was, and still is to some extent today, an important part of the Dutch culture. Hochstrasser cited a very useful source and from that text it indeed becomes clear that salt was a very essential part of the Dutch diet, but by taking the quote out of its context, some crucial context with regard to how the Dutch perceived salt is missed.

Another import product of the WIC is sugar, which can take shape in multiple forms in still lifes. It can be painted as loose sugar, or *kandij*, as was the rock form in which sugar was bought back then. It can also be shown as an ingredient in, for example, pies. Or is visibly shown on for instance sugared almonds or sweets. Examples of such foodstuffs are regularly found in still lifes, especially in the banquets or ‘*ontbijtjes*’ of Floris van Dijck (image 18). In this image the sweets are dominantly positioned in the very center of the table. The plate with sweets is relatively small in comparison to the stack of cheeses behind it or the plates full of fruits on the left and right side of the plate. Nor are the whites and browns used for the sweets very striking in comparison to the greens and reds of the grapes or the yellow and browns of the cheeses. The only more notable color used in depicting the sweets is the blue of the porcelain plate they are placed on. This way of depicting and placing the sweets in the

⁴⁹ Spruit, R. (1988). *Zout en Slaven: De Geschiedenis van de Westindische Compagnie*. Houten: De Haan. Pp. 23, 24.

⁵⁰ She quoted “*one can do better on earth without gold, than without salt*”. P. 140.

⁵¹ Van Beverwijck, J. (1660). *Schat der gesontheyt*. From: *Alle de wercken*. Amsterdam: Ian Iacobsz Schipper. Retrieved on 24-06-2019 from

https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/beve001schoa01_01/beve001schoa01_01_0044.php?q=zout#hl7 P. 145

⁵² Idem.

composition ensures that the sweets blend in the overall view of the laid table, but at the same time play a central and important role within this composition.

The plate of sweets at the table seems rather harmless and fun. However, what this scene does not show are all the difficulties and immoralities to acquire these prestige sweets. Hochstrasser also mentions this phenomenon in her argument:

*“On the surface, there is a more positive, assertive message that draws on and appeals to the power of the Dutch nation, the Dutch consumer, and the Dutch artist, but at the same time, beneath that surface lurk many more troubling complexities glossed over by these elegant renderings.”*⁵³

Despite that sugar was already long known to man, it was a big undertaking for the Dutch when they first started trading with it. After Columbus had brought sugarcane back to Europe after his second voyage of discovery in 1493, it was completely new and unknown in Europe and thus an item of curiosity, which resulted in very high sugar prices. Soon after its introduction to Europe, Europe wanted to cultivate the sugar production and was thus in search of the right climate for the sugarcane to grow in. Historian Ruud Spruit gives more insight into this topic of the cultivation of sugar in his book *Zout en Slaven: De Geschiedenis van de West-Indische Compagnie* (1988) by stating that the Europeans in the 17th century knew that sugarcane needed poor soil but a temperature between the 24 and 30 degrees Celsius and constant moisture.⁵⁴ When the Portuguese tried to cultivate sugarcane in Brazil, it turned out to be a big success since the sugar of the Portuguese was considered as one of the finest quality.⁵⁵

The interference of the Dutch in the sugar trade thus meant that they immediately sought after their own colonies in Brazil, which meant that this led to tensions between the nations, especially since the difficult relationship between The Netherlands and the Iberian. But in 1630 the Dutch Republic succeeded in colonizing several regions in Brazil for their sugar production, better known under the name of New Holland or Dutch Brazil. It is remarkable that despite the aggressive beginnings in gaining colonies for the Dutch sugar trade in Brazil, the Portuguese later helped the Dutch in cultivating their sugar and thereby bettering the relationship between the Portuguese and the Dutch. These developments all seem very positive, as is also shown in still life paintings where the laid tables show impressive meals and commodities from foreign countries that almost scream the national pride of the Dutch trade network.

⁵³ Hochstrasser, P. 271.

⁵⁴ Spruit, R. (1988). *Zout en slaven: de geschiedenis van de Westindische Compagnie*. Houten: De Haan. P. 46

⁵⁵ Hochstrasser. P. 189.

Nevertheless, what was not shown in food still life paintings, was that the production of sugar was very intense and difficult which thus required hard labor. In order to get this hard labor done, slaves were used; these were either poor Europeans or black people from Africa. This dark side of the history of the Dutch trade has been widely discussed, not only in the academic field but also in, for instance, newspapers, television programs or museum exhibitions.⁵⁶

The flourishing of the sugar production thus resulted simultaneously in the flourishing of the slave trade. In the 21st century this is seen as a brutal situation that is never to happen again, for which it is important to keep discussing and highlighting the topic in order that it is not forgotten. But it is questionable how the 17th century viewers of food still lifes looked at the paintings. When looking at records from the 17th century, people did write about the moralizing character of consuming exotic foodstuffs and commodities, but Hochstrasser stresses that they were talking about patriotic and puritanical objections and not about the slavery that was an essential part of the availability of these goods, which, on the contrast, is a point that we with our 21st century eyes focus the most on when looking at the backgrounds of the luscious foods we are seeing at food still lifes; we do so because the whereabouts of the things that are shown in food still lifes are publicly known now.⁵⁷

Schama's argument is much different from Hochstrasser when it regards the perception of exotic comestibles, of which he explicitly discusses sugar. Schama does not address the negative sides of sugar with respect to slavery, although he certainly is familiar with this history and the discourse about it. Instead, he again discusses the perception of sugar by the 17th century moralists and Calvinist preachers. This perception becomes immediately clear by Schama's statement "*But the great enemy, a tireless worker for Satan, was sugar.*".⁵⁸ With this statement he does not refer to the brutal circumstances in which sugar was produced, but to the use of sugar in the Dutch diet. Schama mentions that not only traditional dishes like waffles, poffertjes and pancakes, but also cakes and biscuits were more and more sweetened by the use of sugar. Besides, new flavor combinations were introduced, such as ginger with molasses. Schama cites Otto Belcampius, a well-known preacher in Amsterdam, who saw sugar as an immense threat to the pure moral because the sweetness of sugar would reject gluttony, which was considered as a sin. Schama adds the findings of dentists Harvey and Sheldon Peck to his argument, who did extensive research to the dental

⁵⁶ This discussion ranges from the permanent exhibition for both children and adults in Het Scheepvaartmuseum, to articles like 'Achter die prachtige stillevenen uit de 17de eeuw gaat een lugubere geschiedenis schuil' written by philosopher Michiel Korthals or books like *The Dutch Moment: War, Trade and Settlement in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic World* by historian Willem Klooster. This are just a few of many examples regarding the dark side of the history of the Dutch trade to give a reflection on this broad discourse.

⁵⁷ Hochstrasser, P. 231.

⁵⁸ Schama, S. (1987). P. 165

conditions of 17th century Dutch teeth in the 1970's. They claimed that the condition of the Dutch 17th century teeth were in an immensely bad shape. They even concluded their research by stating that Rembrandt van Rijn must have suffered immense torments due to his bad dental health.⁵⁹

Schama thus gives a very different perception the exotic comestibles, such as spices and sugar, in the Dutch society of the 17th century. It is remarkable that Schama is one of the very few who addresses these perceptions in his argument. Other scholars, like Hochstrasser, do provide an extensive view on the topic they discuss, but they lack to mention the points that Schama does address in his work. The reasons for this can only be based on speculation, since no author does mention explicitly why these points are or are not mentioned in the argument. If I may suggest a possible explanation for why the perception of exotic comestibles by the 17th century Dutch civilization is not often discussed, it could possibly be because perception is a very subjective area. It is very difficult, maybe even impossible, for somebody from the 20th and 21st century to know exactly how people from the 17th century experienced the introduction of these foreign goods. This could be the reason that the majority of scholars focus more on objective information, such as the developments of trade routes or trade agreements between countries. Schama also does use objective information, such as food prices and purchasing power, to strengthen his findings about more subjective findings on perception of exotic foods. For instance, the rich could have had different opinions than the poor based on their availability on the new comestibles. This makes that the findings of Schama contribute to the academic field, since they provide different point of views to topics already so widely discussed: the exotic foodstuffs imported by the VOC and the WIC.

These exotic foodstuffs of the VOC and the WIC are, as became clear in this chapter, also elaborately discussed by Hochstrasser, who does contribute a lot to the academic field regarding imaging the Dutch 17th century trade and imported products. Hochstrasser concludes her argument by stating that in the 17th century there merely was a visual mode of representation, in other words: still life paintings. When it came to showing the comestibles and commodities of the flourishing Dutch trade, the Dutch showed their power through these still lifes and the 'language of commodities'.⁶⁰ She also immediately acknowledges that this visual way of showing national pride, instead of textual or verbal showing, left a lot of room for things to be unspoken, especially the unspeakable events of slavery, murders, martyrdom and robbery that were playing in the background in order to get access to the exotic foodstuffs and commodities, but these backgrounds were not shown in still lifes.

⁵⁹ Schama S. (1987). Pp. 166, 167

⁶⁰ A term that Hochstrasser used frequently throughout her argument.

Still lifes made it look like these things just magically appeared and left unspoken the unspeakable. For this reason, people did not (fully) know the brutal background of the sugar production that laid behind it when they saw a black servant in a still life. An example of this is *Still Life with Moor and Porcelain Vessels* (1670-1680) by Juriaen van Streeck. The public perceived this slave as a colorful addition to the composition, but even more so as a commodity just like the rest that was placed in the scenery.⁶¹ This is also the reason why this painting is still called a still life, despite the fact that still lifes officially do not depict actual figures. For the people who did know the background of comestibles and commodities of the Dutch trade, like merchants or chiefs of the VOC, the still lifes, especially the *pronkstillevens* in the second half of the century, were a representation of superiority, control and power. This is also the most important group of buyers of still life paintings, which reached a peak in the 1660s, which was also the time the Dutch colonial trade was more profitable than ever.⁶² In the 21st century, the Dutch food still lifes tell us most because of the things that they do not show than what they do show. This is a conclusion that is important in our 21st perception on the 17th century food still lifes.

Philosopher Michiel Korthals is particularly interested in how people deal with food, in contemporary times but also in history. He enters the discourse about 17th century Dutch food still life paintings and the exotic goods it shows with his newspaper article 'Achter die prachtige stilleven uit de 17de eeuw gaat een lugubere geschiedenis schuil.' (2017). In this article he also mentions the lurid backgrounds of the exotic products and splendor of the 17th century (food) still lifes and he hereby also explicitly mentions the *pronkstillevens*. He wants to emphasize to the broader public, since this article is written in a well-known newspaper, that too much emphasis is continuously given to the reflection of positivity and the flourishing Dutch trade in still life paintings.

Despite that the negative side of the story behind still life paintings is also widely discussed, as also became clear in this chapter, Korthals states that still too little attention is given to this brutal background by the broader audiences, or the masses. He claims that everybody needs to know about this dark pages in Dutch history, which are disguised by still life paintings, because that background information is crucial to fully understand the still life paintings, the social and economic circumstances of the era. This knowledge is then crucial in our ability to understand how food was perceived. Korthals has a lot of similarities in points of view with Hochstrasser in this particular article, but his overall interest is more in line with Schama, who is far more inclined with the perception of certain foods, which is a key interest of Korthals, as becomes clear from his various publications.⁶³

⁶¹ Hochstrasser, Pp. 265-275

⁶² Kuipers, J. J. B. (2014). Pp. 50-52

⁶³ One of the examples is of course the article mentioned in his chapter, but his books *Before Dinner: Philosophy and Ethics of Food* (2004) and *Genomics, Obesity and the Struggle over Responsibilities*

As I have discussed so far, the 17th century in the Dutch Republic showed a lot of events regarding foodstuffs. The most important events were the VOC and the WIC, which Hochstrasser elaborately discussed the importance of regarding the depiction of food in still life paintings. Because of the flourishing trade, people became familiar with more (exotic) foodstuffs and commodities, and the use of these new objects in food still lifes show that these objects functioned as sources of interests of artists, but also the rich who were able to afford these exotic commodities. However positive the trade was for the Dutch economy and also served as inspirational source for artists, the dark side of the food trade did sometimes subtle show in food still life paintings, by showing a black person in the middle of all the exotic foodstuffs for instance, but often were the brutal backgrounds of obtaining these exotic foodstuffs hidden behind all the splendor of the food still life paintings. For this reason only the people who worked in the trade themselves, like merchants, knew about this, but the masses were often not (fully) aware of these inhuman circumstances.

(2010) also show is interest in foods and the philosophy behind our thinking about certain foods or food habits.

CHAPTER 2: THE TRANSITION FROM FOOD STILL LIFE PAINTING TO FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY

2.1: INTRODUCTION

In the first chapter it is discussed that the emergence of the autonomous food still life paintings in the Dutch Republic in the 17th century was a significant event in the history of food depiction. Until then, food was not seen as a subject that was worth to be depicted on its own, but more as an accompanying aspect in a composition. The occurrence of the autonomous food still life is therefore important for the depiction of food in later centuries, since it totally altered the way food was seen within the art world.

Besides this immense change in how food was seen in the art world, is another immense change that entirely altered the art world in itself: the invention of photography. Before the main authors of food photography are discussed, it is important to give a brief overview of the history of photography to be able to fully understand the changes of the art world, especially regarding the medium of painting, and food as a subject matter in the arts. However, the history of photography is quite complicated, as will be made clear later. For this reason, the lectures of art historian and photographer Jeff Curto, given on the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, Illinois are used as the starting point from which the history of photography will be discussed.⁶⁴ His findings and explanations are then linked to multiple important authors about still life depictions and food photography, of which Susie Protschky's *Dutch Still Lifes and Colonial Visual Culture in the Netherlands Indies, 1800-1949* (2001) and *Feast for the Eyes* (2017) by Susan Bright are the most important.

In first giving a brief overview of the history of photography and then linking that to the insights about the medium of (still life) painting from chapter 1 and to food as subject in photography itself, this chapter aims to answer the question of what the differences are between food as a subject matter in painting and in photography. The focus will be laid on how the invention of photography can explain certain changes in the depiction of food. In order to answer these questions, the insights of the lectures of Curto will be compared to the arguments of Bright and Protschky, making this for the large part an art historical comparative literature and discourse research.

⁶⁴ His classes are recorded and online available, hence that I was able to use them in this essay: Curto, J. (2014). *Photo History Class Sessions*. Retrieved from <http://photohistory.jeffcurto.com/archives/category/class-podcasts?order=asc>

2.2: THE INVENTION OF A NEW MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPHY

In the 19th century, painting had already been a well-established art form for a long period of time. Despite that there were painting genres with less prestige, painting was seen as one of the ultimate forms of art and the art form that was best capable to represent the world around us. However, in the 19th century there was an urge for something more or better than painting. Already in 1794, British writer, teacher and priest William Gilpin wrote a book with the title 'In Pursuit of the Picturesque' where he wrote about how he wanted to 'fix' things that he saw around him in his drawings and paintings, but he found himself not capable enough to do that because his subjects, such as leaves of a tree passing by in a river, passed by too quickly. He was dissatisfied with himself because he was not fast enough to grasp the subject that he wanted to draw or paint. He wrote this book before photography was invented, but from his texts one could deduce from his text that he wanted 'something' that was faster than himself to make the image that he wanted.⁶⁵

Then, in 1727, the scientist Johan Heinrich Schultz discovered that certain salts of silver darken when they are exposed to light and as will become clear later, this was an important discovery regarding the invention of photography. However, it was not until 1802 that Thomas Wedgwood and Humphry Davy started to create images with the principle that was discovered by Schultz. They put salts of silver on a piece of writing paper and then put on top a couple of objects and expose it to light. The result was a shadow image of the object that was put on top of the paper, better known as a photogram. For this reason Wedgwood and Davy could be seen as the first photographers.⁶⁶

But, there are more persons that are seen as the inventors of photography. One of these persons was Joseph Nicéphore Niépce. Just like Wedgwood and Davy, Niépce had a scientific interest in fixing images, not artistic like Gilpin. During the 1820's, Niépce also was interested in doing experimenting with light sensitive materials. He was familiar with the work of Schultz, Wedgwood and Davy, but Niépce was looking for something better, since the images made by Wedgwood and Davy were not permanent, fixed images.⁶⁷ Instead, Niépce used a metal plate and covered it with a mixture that contained bitumen of Judea and let it dry.⁶⁸ After that, Niépce placed an object on the metal plate and brought it out in the sunlight. Niépce discovered that where a lot of light hit the bitumen of Judea, it became hard

⁶⁵ Curto, J. (January 24, 2014). Photo History – Class 2 – History Survey Part 1. Retrieved on 08-08-2019 from <http://photohistory.jeffcurto.com/archives/category/class-podcasts?order=asc>

⁶⁶ Gernsheim, H. (1983). *The Origins of Photography*. Thames & Hudson. Pp. 23.

⁶⁷ The images kept darkening when they were exposed to light and it was not known how to stop that process.

⁶⁸ Bitumen of Judea is a sort of liquid asphalt and a light sensitive material. The mixture likely consisted of powdered bitumen of Judea and lavender oil. For more information: <http://www.photo-museum.org/niepce-invention-photography/>.

and solid. However, where little light hit, the it stayed soluble. After an exposure time of hours or even days to the light, Niepce would take the metal plate back inside to his studio and would bath the plate in a bath of diluted lavender oil that dissolved the bitumen of Judea parts that were hit with little light. The result of this was a fixed image of the object he laid on top of the ‘asphalt’ metal plate. Niepce called this sort of image a heliograph.⁶⁹ In 1827, Niepce went a bit further and figured that the metal plate could also work when it was put in the back of a camera obscura device. After an exposure time for 8 hours, Niepce took the metal plate out of the camera obscura device and the result is mostly regarded as the world’s first photograph (image 19). This was a very big step in the development, but there were also problems with this way of making images. For example, the changes in sunlight during the exposure time of approximately 8 hours were problematic because they impacted the fidelity of the photograph: it was high sunlight in the morning and low sunlight late in the afternoon. Niepce discovered that he needed a constant light source during the exposure time to make reliable images.⁷⁰

Then, in 1829, business and artist Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre formed a partnership with Niepce. Daguerre was interested in a faster way to make pictures because of his theatre: The Diorama. The backgrounds that were shown in this theatre were made by hand, but Daguerre wanted more and more people to come to his theatre and in order to accomplish this, he wanted to come up with new shows more often. However, these new shows called for new backgrounds, but these were painted by hand and thus very time consuming to make. Daguerre had heard of the experiments of Niepce and they thus formed a partnership.

Together they would experiment with light sensitive materials and they came up with a refined process that was very different from Niepce’s original process. To start with, they would take a piece of copper and plated that with silver. They would then fume heated iodine over the silver plated copper plate. In a reaction to this step, the silver and the iodine would combine and form silver salts. They thus used the insights of silver salts of Schultz. This fumed over plate was put into the back of a camera obscura device. At the end of the exposure time, the image was not visible on the plate. In order to make the image visible, the plate was fumed over by mercury vapors.⁷¹

Daguerre and Niepce were thus working on new technologies to make pictures, with among other things, shorter exposure times. But then in 1833, Niepce dies. After that,

⁶⁹ ‘Heliograph’ is derived from ‘heliograph’, which is from the Greek word ‘hielios’ which means ‘sun’ and the word ‘graph’ which means ‘writing’ or ‘drawing’. A heliograph/heliograph thus literally means a ‘sun picture’.

⁷⁰ Curto, J. (January 24, 2014). Photo History – Class 2 – History Survey Part 1. Retrieved on 08-08-2019 from <http://photohistory.jeffcurto.com/archives/category/class-podcasts?order=asc>

⁷¹ Maison Nicéphore Niepce. (n.d.). *Niepce and the Invention of Photography*. Retrieved on 31-07-2019 from <http://www.photo-museum.org/niepce-invention-photography/#>

Daguerre continues to work on perfecting the process of picture making that he and Niepce came up with and on January 7th in 1839, Daguerre announces the invention of the daguerreotype to the French Academy of Sciences. The name of the daguerreotype is striking because Niepce gets no credit at all with this name for the image making process that Daguerre made together with Niepce. Nevertheless, Daguerre and his daguerreotype are seen as the founders of the medium of photography, because he was the first to write down and formally submit the results of the experiments that led to making photographs. Besides, the daguerreotype was the first photographic technique that was made public, which eventually resulted in the so-called daguerreotype mania.⁷²

After his submission, Daguerre continues to experiment with the daguerreotype and at first he does this by making still life images. The choice for still life images was quite logical because the exposure time was still run up to several minutes and the objects of a still life composition did not move, image 20 is an example of such an experiment with still lifes by Daguerre.

But, in the 1820's and 1830's in England, there was William Henry Fox Talbot, who was also very interested in picture making and experimenting with his own photographic techniques. At first he was experimenting with writing paper soaked in silver salts and making photograms with them, which Fox Talbot called 'photogenic drawings'. This very much resembles what Wedgwood and Davy did. However, Fox Talbot took it a step further. He would put the light sensitive paper in the back of a camera, which would give him a negative image. Then, he figured out that if this negative was placed in contact with another piece of light sensitized paper, it contact printed a positive image. The result of this contact printing to create a positive image he called a 'calotype'. As will be discussed later on, Fox Talbot was very important for food still life photography.

These are some of the most important persons regarding the invention of photography. The history of photography is of course much longer and complicated than what has been discussed so far, with developments like wet-plate collodion negatives, albumen prints, ambrotypes, tintypes and autochrome are just a few of the many very important steps and developments that were made in the 19th and 20th century. However important these developments are in discussing the history of photography, they will not be

⁷² Curto, J. (January 24, 2014). Photo History – Class 2 – History Survey Part 1. Retrieved on 08-08-2019 from <http://photohistory.jeffcurto.com/archives/category/class-podcasts?order=asc>; The daguerreotype fed the need and desire to get portraited. Before, one could only have its portrait painted if the person was wealthy and of high status. The price to make a daguerreotype was high, but much lower in comparison to portrait painting. The daguerreotype became big business and daguerreotype studios were emerged not only all across France, but multiple parts in Europe. Competition began to force the price of picture making down. Pictures were much less expensive towards the end of the 1840's.

further discussed in this chapter because a full explanation of the history of photography will not directly serve to answer the research question of this chapter.⁷³

Therefore, only a few developments of the history of photography will be discussed with regard to answering the sub question. In addition to this, a trip will be made from Europe to the Netherlands Indies to provide a more international perspective of the developments of photography. As will be made clear, this trip will be fruitful for a more complete understanding of the international use of photography and the genre of still life and food photography.

2.3: A TRIP TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PAINTING AND PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE NETHERLANDS INDIES

As chapter one made clear about 17th century still life paintings, it is important to analyze from an international point of view the topic of still life to fully understand it. For the sake of this full understanding, a little trip is made from Europe to the Netherlands Indies. An prominent voice regarding the history of still life photography in the Netherlands Indies with respect to food is Susie Protschky. In her text *Dutch Still Lifes and Colonial Visual Culture in the Netherlands Indies, 1800-1949* (2001) she discusses the relationship between still life painting and still life photography from a colonial point of view instead of a Western point of view.⁷⁴ Her text is therefore a good addition to the overview of the history of photography that is discussed above.⁷⁵

Protschky points out to the explicit relationship between Dutch 17th century still life painting and 19th and 20th century photography made in the Dutch Indies. In contrast to the Dutch Republic, and also Europe, there is not a long history of still life paintings in the Netherlands Indies. In fact, the entire practice of painting as an art form was little practiced in the Dutch Indies, which is an immense difference with European/Dutch history regarding

⁷³ For full explanations of the history of photography, books like *History of Photography* (1987) by Peter Turner; *On Photography* (1977) by Susan Sontag or *Photography: An illustrated History* (2002) by Martin W. Sandler are just a few of the many books about the history of photography and the medium of photography.

⁷⁴ The Netherlands Indies was one of the most important colonies of the Dutch Republic from the 17th century until the first half of the 20th century. The Netherlands Indies only became independent in 1945, after which it was named Indonesia.

⁷⁵ In addition, Protschky does not deny the importance of texts with such a Western point of view, but she explicitly stresses the importance to also research the topic of Dutch still life paintings, and later photography, from a different standpoint to get a full understanding of the matter.

still life paintings.⁷⁶ Despite that painting, and the genre of still life, was a relatively small part of the arts of the Indies, it is an important part for the understanding of not only the still life genre in an international context, but also for analyzing photographic developments from a different, non-western, perspective.

Dutch still life paintings from the 17th century were obsessed with materiality, commodities and the superiority of man over nature in a painterly mode in order to represent the things as beautiful and romanticized as possible. The scene was almost always inside with a dark background that made objects on the table top pop out. The brutal backgrounds of the commodities and foodstuffs that were shown in these paintings were disguised by much splendor. Dutch Indies still life paintings differ significantly from the Dutch in the way that they were not made to show a painterly and romanticized mode of representation, but they were made in a botanical and more scientific mode of depiction, without all the finery that is shown in Dutch still lifes.

This difference becomes especially clear when, for example, the work *Pronkstilleven met vruchten, kazen, brood en wijn* of Floris van Dijck (image 18) is compared to the Indies still life painting *Still Life with Tropical Fruits* of Albert Eckhout, which is one of the few examples of still life painting from the Indies (image 21). The composition is, in contrast to Dutch still lifes, not set inside, but outside underneath a dark threatening sky and the fruits are depicted according to the botanical way of depicting, which was of a scientific nature since botanical drawings and paintings were the only way to document newly discovered plants, insects, etc. which was thus to be done properly.

With the invention of daguerreotype in 1839, photographic practices were soon undertaken in the Indies, in first instance as a more accurate and precise way of documenting scientific documents, as was formerly done by botanical drawings. However, the botanical way of depicting still life was continued in photographic still lifes. This resembles the same development of photography in Europe; it first copied the conventions of painting. Protschky also gives reasons for this continuation that are very similar to the European development of photography.

Protschky claims that the 19th century audience perceived photography not so much as art but as a way of reportage since it was a mechanical process that required no specific skills of the person who took the photograph. This is the reason that botanical way of displaying may have been considered as more suitable for (still life) photography. Protschky also argues that another reason for the preference for still life photography could be that photography was very new and in development, which meant that people were inexperienced in using the

⁷⁶ Susie Protschky, (2011), *Dutch Still Lifes and Colonial Visual Culture in the Netherlands Indies, 1800-1949*. Retrieved on 30-06-2019 from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1467-8365.2010.00800.x>. P. 516.

medium and that every bit of movement in the shutter speed ended up in a blur in the photograph; with inanimate objects this would not happen.⁷⁷

This sounds very comparable to the European photography history, but in Europe there is no abundance of botanical representations. In the first years of photography in Europe, still life was indeed much practiced by photographers and photography was at first also not so much seen as an independent art form, but after that, the genre of still life became less and less practiced. Protschky argues that the reason for the continuation of botanical modes representation in the Netherlands Indies was because of the enduring popularity of natural history and collecting in the Dutch Indies during the 19th and 20th centuries by Europeans who went to the colony. Collections not only showed European scientific expertise and mastery over natural sources, but the colonial collections of plants and objects gleaned from unfamiliar landscapes, gave the owner a status of elite, because only those who had the time, money, education and social networks were able to indulge themselves in such interests.

This collecting in the colony is originated to the cabinets of curiosity.⁷⁸ This phenomenon first occurred in the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe. Cabinets of curiosities were collections with remarkable, unusual and exotic things, varying from things belonging to natural history; such as (exotic) plants or (parts of) animals; archaeological finds, objects from other cultures; for instance from a colony; art and antiquities. They merely served the aim of create curiosity about the world, scientific research or to show the status and prestige of the owner. Many modern day museums started out as a cabinet of curiosities, such as the British Museum in London or Boerhaave Museum in The Netherlands in Leiden.⁷⁹

The history of the cabinets of curiosities explains why Europeans who visited the colony of the Netherlands Indies were so eager to obtain new additions to their collections. Botanical drawings were popular by collectors, because they accurately showed (exotic) plant species and were much easier to bring back or preserve than actual plants. This could be an important explanation for the persistence of botanical representation in Dutch Indies still life photography.

⁷⁷ Protschky S. (2011). P. 525

⁷⁸ Cabinets of curiosities are also known as 'Wunderkammer', 'Kunstkabinett', 'Cabinets of Wonder' or 'Wonder-Rooms'.

⁷⁹ The history of the cabinets of curiosities is of course much more extensive than is discussed here. The paragraph about the cabinets of curiosities merely serves as a historical background to the argument that is made by Protschky. For more information about the Wunderkammern, read one of the many publications about it, of which Weil, S. (1995). *A cabinet of curiosities : Inquiries into museums and their prospects*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press; or Limbird, J. (1824) *The Cabinet of Curiosities: Or, Wonders of the World Displayed, Forming a Repository of Whatever is Remarkable in the Regions of Nature and Art, Extraordinary Events, and Eccentric Biography*. Retrieved from

https://books.google.nl/books?id=2Y4AAAAAYAAJ&dq=cabinet+of+curiosities&hl=nl&source=gbs_navlinks_s; are some examples.

Thus, the Indies still life genre was merely botanical in nature as opposed to the Dutch visual culture that was made in a painterly mode of representation. The difference is also present in the objects that are depicted in the still life paintings and also photographs. Like is already mentioned, in Dutch still life paintings from the 17th century are the imports from the flourishing Dutch trade exhibited, showing the pride of the nation, where the brutal backgrounds were kept hidden from the public. In the Indies in the 19th century, the export products that were cultivated there were not depicted in the still life paintings and photographs. Rather, the subjects were the tropical fruits of which the Indies naturally had an abundance of, not showing any trace of the colonial domination of the Europeans. Indies still lifes celebrated nature free from the civilizing touch of Western culture. Protschky argues that this is not because Indies artists were in denial of colonialization and the traded crops, but because they opted for a world where abundance (of foods) was natural, and not forced by labor. Besides, in contrast to the ignorance in the 17th century regarding the cruelty that was at the basis of the exported goods to The Netherlands, in the 19th century people did know the brutal backgrounds, which made it harder to show a celebration of plantation crops.⁸⁰

Despite this knowledge about the brutalities behind the plantation crops in the colonies which made it hard to celebrate these crops in still life painting; in photography there was something quite contradictory going on in the 19th century regarding the subject of colonies. This movement is best exemplified by a statement of visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff: *“Photography was a key tool in visualizing colonial possessions and demonstrating Western superiority over the colonized.”*⁸¹ Mirzoeff hereby referred to the photographs taken by the many ‘adventurers’ that went to the colonies and were able to take pictures there because of the technological photographic innovations of dry-plate photography in the 1880’s. This enabled them to take their photographic materials with them on trips, even though a lot of materials were needed, such as chemicals to develop the images and cameras. Additionally, the images were to be made on glass plates coated with silver salts, which were fragile, which made photographing abroad an intense enterprise; nevertheless, it was the first form of photographic practice that was able to be brought along.⁸²

Mirzoeff’s statement suggests that with regard to colonialism, photography was used in the same way as Western painting: to show the superiority of the West (Europe and America) over colonized countries and areas. It seems quite contradictory that the still life photographs of the Dutch Indies were not able to depict plantation crops because people

⁸⁰ Protschky S. (2011). Pp. 530 - 532

⁸¹ Mirzoeff, N. (2009). *An introduction to visual culture* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge. P. 134.

⁸² Mirzoeff, N. (2009). P. 133 - 135

were aware of the brutal circumstances they were grown, but around the same time (19th century) photography was also used to show the superiority of the West over colonies. There is not a clear explanation for this contraposition. A possible explanation could be that the colonial photographs did not show the cruelties that happened, but merely situations where the white seem to ‘improve’ the standard of living in the colony. Native people from the colonies were seen as uncivilized that were to be civilized by the Western rulers by working for them and following their rules, religion and other cultural habits.⁸³

Protschky showed us in her argument that there are many differences between 17th century Dutch still life painting and still life painting and photography in the former colonial Dutch Indies, but that the still life practices of both parts of the world is better understood when they are juxtaposed to each other. However, Protschky focused on a comparison between Dutch 17th century still life painting and 19th century Dutch Indies still life painting and photography. This juxtaposition between painting and photography gave fruitful insights about the development of (still life) photography in the Dutch Indies, but gave less insights into the Western relationship between painting and photography. For this reason, we make a trip back to Europe to analyze the developments in the Western art world regarding the relation between painting and photography.

2.4: BACK TO THE WEST: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PAINTING AND PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE WEST

With the invention of photography, artists and photographers were looking for the function of the new medium and were wondering what this new medium exactly was. Some saw it as an scientific accurate way to document something, others saw it as art. This search for identity of the medium resulted in various developments in both mediums.

In the very beginning years of photography in Europe and America, the medium was very much linked to the medium of painting. When looking at landscape photographs from the 19th century and comparing these images to landscape paintings of the period, it shows very many similarities and they are stylistically not different to landscape paintings that were being made in the 19th century. This can be explained by some 19th century texts about painting and photography and some events in the 19th century. For example, the French chemist and editor Gaston Tissandier wrote in his book *A History and Handbook of Photography* (1876) that a photographic collection was a good basis on which painters could base their paintings. Tissandier was not the only one who thought this way, since it was a

⁸³ Mirzoeff, N. (2009). Pp. 130 – 140

common phenomenon for painters to buy photographs at stores with the aim of mimicking those photographs in their paintings. It was an improvement for painters since photographs were a lot cheaper than hiring a model for their studies.⁸⁴ Examples of works of famous painters who worked this way are *Odalisque* from Eugene Delacroix (image 22) and the painting *Château the Chillon* by Gustave Courbet after a picture of Adolphe Braun (image 23).

Besides all the excitement and positivity with the arrival of photography, there were also people who were not so excited about this new medium. One of these people was poet and art critic Charles Baudelaire. He saw photography as a medium that heralded the arrival of poverty in the artistic world and laziness for artists, since it was not necessarily to make and finish studies anymore.

Despite this criticism, photographers were just after the turn from the 19th to the 20th century trying to define their photographs as art, not just as a tool for painters but as an autonomous art medium. Photographer Peter Henry Emerson wrote about his colleague photographer Julia Margaret Cameron that she was one of the few photographers who saw the medium as it really was and not as a tool for painters. According to Emerson, Cameron succeeded in recording the very essence of life in her work and that her work showed a sense of emotions and expression that had not yet been done in painting.⁸⁵

As becomes clear from Emerson's account about Cameron, he saw photography as a way of capturing and showing the real world and real life. Making photographs like paintings to make them art was, according to Emerson, not the way photography should be evolving. Accordingly, he thought that photography could be the highest art form if it was practiced correctly, by which he meant that the images were not to be altered or manipulated, which was a very common practice by photographers. Emerson wrote his ideas down in his book *Naturalistic Photography for Students of the Arts* (1889). The movement of photographers who applied these ideas is called straight or pure photography.

For this reason, he did not approve of the works of Oscar Rejlander or Henry Peach Robinson, who both made photographs to look like art. A famous example of Rejlander's work is *The Two Ways of Life* which he made by combining 30 separate negatives on a single sheet of photographic printing paper. This work turned out to be too big for the maximum size of printing paper, so he had to sew two printing papers together in order to make this work. This work is thus completely fictional and made to look like an art work, much like the work *School of Athens* from Raphael. Robinson also made completely fictional photographs

⁸⁴ Curto, J. (February 20, 2014). Photo History – Class 6 – Photography and Painting . Retrieved on 08-08-2019 from <http://photohistory.jeffcurto.com/archives/category/class-podcasts?order=asc>

⁸⁵ Idem.

by creating stories in his images by also putting multiple negatives together to form one image.

The ideas of Emerson and the movement of straight photography instigated the movement of pictorialism. Despite that the base of this movement was already established in 1869 by the book *Pictorial Effect in Photography* (1869) by Henry Peach Robinson, the movement of pictorialism really started to take off as a countermovement to straight photography. The followers of pictorialism thought, in order to make photographic art, that their photographs should imitate the conventions of painting.⁸⁶

The search for the identity of photography did not stop with straight photography and pictorialism, Alfred Stieglitz took it a step further by gathering a group of colleague photographers around him and seduce themselves from photography. They called themselves the Photo Secessionists. They stated that they did not like how the medium was working out because a lot of photographs were still made to look like paintings. For this reason they wanted to split from the medium and wanted to make photography an artform separate from the pictorial movement. Photography could be an artform of its own without to try to look like anything else. The group held the viewpoint that it was not important what was in front of the camera, but how the photographer could include his subjective vision in a photograph without manipulation it afterwards. Until then, photography was not seen as a medium that was capable of conveying symbolic intent and this new point of view generated several reactions.

First, after the invention of photography, painting continued to be seen as the art form that could convey symbolic meaning. With the establishment of the Photo Secession, also painters started to think about their place in the art world. One of the reactions in the art world was the emergence of Fauvism. According to the Fauves, it was the era of photography, so they did not want to make images out of life. Instead, they made images in which they did not use values (light or dark), but the intensity of colors to describe certain areas in the composition as darker or lighter. These paintings were not about describing something out of life, but about how color moves the eye. The Fauves liberated color from the descriptive meaning.⁸⁷

The Fauvist ideas were in line with the statements about photography made by Picasso. Picasso argued that with the invention of photography, painters should use this new freedom to do something completely different in their painted art works. Why should painting keep imitating stories, literature and objects if photography is already doing that.

⁸⁶ Lenman, R., Nicholson, A. (2005). Pictorialism. *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*. Retrieved on 05-08-2019 from <https://www-oxfordreference-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2443/view/10.1093/acref/9780198662716.001.0001/acref-9780198662716-e-1226>

⁸⁷ Ederfield, J. (1976). "Wild Beasts" *Fauvism and Its Affinities*. Museum of Modern Art. P. 20.

Instead, painters should explore the world the way it looks through their own eyes. A practical example of Picasso's point of view is the movement of Cubism. The camera was not able to capture objects from multiple points of view at the same time, this is exemplified by Eadweard Muybridge and his photographic movement studies. For this studies he placed multiple cameras around his object to capture the movement simultaneously from different points of view. Because it were photographs, it was not possible to capture the multiple movements in one photograph. Picasso figured that painting was able to show multiple points of view simultaneously in one image, which he did in his cubist works.⁸⁸

With the action painting works of Jackson Pollock, there was an ultimate turning point in the art world: photography was the medium that could realistically represent the world and convey symbolic meaning and painting was going in a completely different direction with abstract expressionism. Pollocks works are about paint, color, line and texture; this were things that photography could not (yet) represent.

This turning point in the art world lasted until the 1980's, with Olivia Parker. She was one of the few photographers to turn the attention back to the interaction between painting and photography again, rather than focusing on the break between.⁸⁹ Olivia Parker is also specifically interesting regarding food photography, since she was one of the firsts to redirect photography's attention back to still life, a genre that was important in the early years of photography, but as technological advances were made, was less and less needed and practiced. Parker is simultaneously exploring something new by playing with colors and lighting in her still life photographs, but at the same time bringing photography back to the still life imagery of the very early years of photography.⁹⁰ This rediscovery of the photographic still life genre reached its absolute peak in the foodie culture.

2.5: THE FOODIE CULTURE

When Fox Talbot made his *A Fruit Piece* picture in 1845, he made it according to the conventions of painting (image 24). The picture was part of a series that were combined in the last section of the book *The Pencil of Nature* (1846). In this book, Fox Talbot wanted to show the various ways in which photography could be used to make art. The specific

⁸⁸ Curto, J. (February 20, 2014). Photo History – Class 6 – Photography and Painting . Retrieved on 08-08-2019 from <http://photohistory.jeffcurto.com/archives/category/class-podcasts?order=asc>

⁸⁹ This break refers to the earlier mentioned turning point, where painting and photography are seen as two distinct, independent mediums that both focus on their own intrinsic values and characteristics.

⁹⁰ N. A. (January 19th, 2015). *The Legacy of the Still Life in Olivia Parker's Exploratory Photography*. Retrieved on 01-08-2015 from <https://www.artsy.net/article/halley-johnson-the-legacy-of-the-still-life-in-1>

photograph *A Fruit Piece* is now seen as the first photograph with food as its main subject matter. Much has changed since this photography regarding the subject of food in photography. Where Fox Talbot drew on the conventions of painting to make *A Fruit Piece*, this quickly changed in the 20th and 21st centuries when entirely new ways of depicting the subject matter food show up in photography.

Despite that many differences that occur in the depiction of food in photography, there is a lack of academic texts that give a well explained overview of these developments.⁹¹ For this reason is *Feast for the Eyes* (2017) of Susan Bright a welcome addition to the field of not only food photographic history, but also culinary history and cultural history where she does not only discuss developments and photographers from the United States, but also from multiple countries in Europe, such as Britain and France. The book shows not only food photography in relation to the culinary world, like in cookbooks, but also shows that food is a part of multiple industries, like the fashion industry, as well (image 24).

Bright says that this ubiquity of food photography is exactly the reason why there is such a lack on (academic) texts that give a complete history of food photography. Bright's argument makes clear that food photography ranges from cookbooks to fashion magazine to advertising and from commercial, artistic to vernacular photography. This shows that food photography indeed is a very broad field. This is especially clarified with Bright's statement of "*Ultimately food is not only about literal taste, but also Taste with a capital T – both the lifestyles we aspire to and the building blocks of culture itself. And so, similarly, photographs of food are rarely just about food.*"⁹² Food is interwoven in all aspects of human life and culture, which makes in an incredibly important but simultaneously very hard to grasp subject matter.

This chapter will not discuss all the fields that Bright addresses, since not all fields are directly relevant in answering the sub-question, like fashion photography with food (image 25). However, there cannot be focused on just one field, for example exclusively on artistic food photographs, because the fields have so many overlap that isolating only one field for research would give an incomplete view on the food photographic practices with regard on the changes in food perception.

In the Dutch 17th century, painters wanted to depict the foodstuffs in their still lifes as beautiful and delicious as possible and without denying the many changes and developments

⁹¹ Despite that there is an overall lack of academic writing about food photography, the (newspaper) authors that did try to compose a history of food photography very often refer back to the work of Bright. Examples of this are: Tursten, J. (2017). Food Photography, Over the Years. *New York Times*; Cain, A. (2017). *Food Photography Didn't Start on Instagram—Here's Its 170-Year History*. Retrieved from <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-food-photography-start-instagram-170-year-history>

⁹² Bright, S. (2017). *Feast for the Eyes*. New York: Aperture. P. 6.

between painting and photography and the depiction of food since then, commercial food photographers still have that same aim.

Bright states that the roots of food photography, by which she refers to the commercial practices of food photography, began in the 20th century in the interbellum (1918-1939) with photographer Nickolas Muray. Born in Germany, Muray studied photoengraving and simultaneously worked for a publishing company. It was during this time that he perfected experimental color processes for photographic practices. Especially after Muray moved to the United States, he put these successful experiments in use of commercial practices, which resulted in an explosion of printing and publishing possibilities in photography. Also Muray's heavily styled food photographs were very successful. These images offered an escape of an America without anxieties and food shortages caused by World War II and were the staple in many American magazines about lifestyle and fashion in the late 1940s and 1950s.⁹³

Simultaneously, it was also in the 1950s that the American economy was booming, which resulted in many (new) consumer goods. With the upcoming advertising business in this developing consumer society, many of these new consumer goods were to be photographed. Photographers like Muray, but also Anton Bruehl and Victor Keppler were important in bringing the images of the new products to the homes of the consumers. The pictures were colorful and happy, so people would associate the products with an America that was improving and were more likely to buy the products.⁹⁴

The practices of commercial photography kept growing and when advances in color printing were made, photography became more affordable which caused that it was used more and more in magazines and cookbooks. This development was picked up by commercial companies that sequentially started to make their own books and cook booklets. These cook booklets were especially important when it came to photography because they were especially made to promote a brand's products. One example of such a cook booklet was made by Crisco, a company that sells vegetable oils and shortening for baking, in 1949. The cook booklet shows photographs that represent a mother that is frying donuts for her two children in a perfectly clean kitchen, which is at least remarkable since she is deep-frying. The amount of donuts would be too much of the amount of people on the picture. According to Bright, this abundance of food represents an flourishing country in which the woman was responsible for feeding her family. Feminism had not yet struck in the domestic spheres.⁹⁵

Another cook booklet is the one made by Knox Gelatine in 1963: *Knox On-Camera Recipes: A Completely New Guide to Gel-Cookery*. This is one of the first works regarding

⁹³ Bright, S. (2017). Pp. 100 - 105

⁹⁴ Bright, S. (2017). P. 11 - 13

⁹⁵ Bright, S. (2017). Pp. 86 - 91

food photography that showed a connection between food photography and television which accordingly suggests growing popularity of cooking for a big audience. Additionally, this cook booklet also showed that home cooks can make beautiful gelatin meals themselves that look good enough to be on the television.

Such cook booklets announced a little shift in food depiction. The focus remained on depicting meals as beautiful as possible, but with these cook booklets, the (images of) meals were brought to the homes of the American consumers which they could replicate themselves. This is a difference with the food still life paintings or early still life photography, where food was not shown with the aim to be reproduced by its spectators, but could serve as an image of pride or worship, contemplation, enjoyment or experiment. With the shift of purpose of images from pictures to be merely looked at to pictures that were to evoke an action, namely to buy the products and make them yourself, another phenomenon emerged, that of food styling.

Additionally to food photography, cooking shows became more and more popular from the 1960's onwards. One of the first popular cooking shows and television cooks in America was Julia Child. Her cookbook *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (1961) became a bestseller and her cooking shows on television was watched by many.⁹⁶ This development of increasing popularity of cookbooks and television cooking shows continued to grow from the 1960's into the 1970's to the 1980's, not only in America, but also in Europe. Food had become such a popular interest that restaurant critic and author Gael Greene coined in New York Magazine the term 'foodie'. This term was later picked up by Ann Barr and Paul Levy in their book *The Official Foodie Handbook* in 1984. After this, the term got picked up more and more by other authors.⁹⁷

This term refers to a person who is interested in all aspects of food, which varies from wine tasting, beer sampling, food science, eating in restaurants, preparing meals with fresh and good ingredients, food distribution, food production, nutrition, cooking classes, cook books/cooking television shows, etc. It is a long list, which shows that the foodie is interested in food in its broadest sense. The group of people who are often seen to make up this newly evolving subculture are the millennials, which is the generation born between 1981 and 1996. However, the following generation, to which is referred to as generation Z, seen to continue with this big interest in food.

⁹⁶ Her popularity was not forgotten in the 21st century. A biographical film, named *Julie & Julia*, was made about Child in 2009 where Meryl Streep played the role of Julia Child.

⁹⁷ A few examples are Lundin, P. (December 1985). Mad for Mascarpone: The Thoroughly Modern Foodie. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <https://global-factiva-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2443/ga/default.aspx>; Benjamin, J. (June 2016). *Foodie culture and its impact on the culinary landscape*. Retrieved from <https://www.lightspeedhq.com/blog/foodie-culture-impact/>

Bright also addresses the importance of vernacular photography in her argument, since moments people chose to photograph often revolved around food. Examples of this are wedding pictures around the wedding cake, birthday parties with birthday cake, summer evening barbeques or Christmas dinners. These pictures can show us a lot about how people ate and treated foodstuffs. The development of vernacular photography got an immense boost in October 2010 with the invention of Instagram by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger.⁹⁸

The social media platform can be downloaded on mobile devices and enables users to make pictures with their phones and upload these photos to the platform. These pictures can be edited with numerous filters, tagged with hashtags and also location information can be added to the uploaded content.⁹⁹ The social media platform grew very rapidly, with one million users in two months after its launch to one billion active users worldwide in 2019.¹⁰⁰

The amount of users shows the popularity of the app by masses of people, but a subculture that is especially often put into relation to Instagram are the foodies. There are many Instagram accounts that are entirely focused on food and people who consider themselves as a foodie often take pictures of their food that are also often edited with filters to make the food look as good as possible.¹⁰¹ This resulted in pictures made for Instagram by Instagram users that resemble the quality and feel of actual artistic food (still life) pictures or commercial food photography, but, strictly seen, are vernacular photographs.

An important change that this overlap caused, is that food related businesses, like companies of processed food or restaurants, also began advertising on Instagram, and other social platforms alike.¹⁰² This caused that everybody who has a mobile device, like a smart phone or a tablet, had all day and everyday access to these platforms and are thus flooded with many images as a part of everyday life. When these worldwide popular social media platforms are seen with regard to food photography, it shows that people are surrounded by

⁹⁸ There were of course many developments between the increasing popularity caused by Kodak and the invention of Instagram, of which the introduction of digital photography is one of the important examples. These are not denied in this essay. However, these developments are consciously not mentioned in this chapter because, important as they are, they did not impact direct consequences regarding the developments that are discussed in this chapter.

⁹⁹ Despite that Instagram was a new medium app for mobile devices, it initially only produced square pictures and not the usual rectangular picture format of mobile phones. This square photo format refers back to the Kodak Instamatic-camera and the Polaroid camera. This was altered in 2015, after which pictures of every format could be uploaded.

¹⁰⁰ Mohsin, M. (March 2019). *Instagram Statistics: 10 Instagram Stats Every Marketer Should Know in 2019 [Infographic]*. Retrieved from <https://www.oberlo.com/blog/instagram-stats-every-marketer-should-know>

¹⁰¹ A few famous 'foodie' Instagram accounts are: @halfbakedharvest, @rachaelsgoodeats, @littlemissbento, @jamieoliver or @nigellalawson.

¹⁰² Food photography and advertising is not only restricted to Instagram. Often, all social platforms are used to spread (vernacular) food photographs on, like Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter or Snapchat. It should also be mentioned that cooking television also experienced a shift with the occurrence of social platforms, since Youtube also features a lot of cooking and food related channels, which often act as a replacement or addition to the programs on television. However, since this essay is focused on food photography and not food in film, this is not extensively discussed in this research.

food photography all the time. Food photography is not only shown in cooking shows on television, in cook books or as an element in private family albums; the photographs are constantly shared by users of social media, advertisements can reach us all the time through our smart devices, in addition to television or food photography and advertising on the street.¹⁰³ Additionally, all these developments made possible that pictures are shared and advertisements are launched from all over the world, which show and introduce the 21st century citizen a global view of food photography, cooking, advertisements and so forth.

Accordingly, also politics respond to these developments of increased exposure to the subject of food and thus also food photography, because politics know food can be a powerful tool. Culinary diplomacy is something that is used for a long time. Culinary diplomacy deals with governments interacting with other foreign governments. This means that food is used as a strategic form of communication that help countries achieve political goals.¹⁰⁴ Examples of this are official state dinners, which welcome foreign leaders as guest of honor. One of the strategies played by such a diner are naming a course to the guest of honor.¹⁰⁵

Recently, another development occurred of food and food photography used as political tools: gastrodiploamacy. Despite that the term of gastrodiploamacy is sometimes used as a synonym with culinary diplomacy, there are differences between the terms.

Gastrodiploamacy works in a different way. Governments are not only using food as a tool for interacting with other governments, they also try to influence foreign publics through food. The most notable example of this is the gastrodiploamacy campaign of Thailand. Starting in the early 2000's, the Thai government started a campaign that was supposed to encourage the growth of Thai restaurants all across the world. In order to do this, they gave (Thai) people who wanted to open a Thai restaurant soft loan financing, easy access to fresh Thai products or special visas for Thai chefs. The aim of this campaign was to promote themselves with the attractiveness of their culture, in other words: the more Thai food people ate around the world, the more interest they would get in Thai culture, which would hopefully result in a grow of tourism to Thailand.¹⁰⁶ Food and food images are thus purposefully used to alter the perception of the public regarding certain food and certain cultures and many people are not even consciously aware of such campaigns.

Gastrodiploamacy is thus a little bit different in than advertisements regarding certain foods or cultures. Gastrodiploamacy is a political game with the aim to change foreign publics perceptions about the food and the country the food is from. Food advertising, or food

¹⁰³ An ultimate example of how street advertisement is used, in both poster form as big screens on buildings, is Times Square in New York City.

¹⁰⁴ These political goals can be to establish a political relationship with another country or convincing a nation to sign a deal.

¹⁰⁵ Spence, C. (2016). *Gastrodiploamacy: Assessing the role of food in decision-making. Flavour*, Vol.5(1).

¹⁰⁶ Idem.

marketing, is more directly aimed to get you to buy the foodstuff of food product that is in the spotlight of the photograph and less about altering the perception of a foreign public. This differences regarding food marketing and the sometimes dark side that lures underneath the surface of food marketing and the dark side of the food industry will be addressed in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3: THE DARK SIDES OF FOOD DEPICTION

3.1: INTRODUCTION

This last chapter will address briefly some of the dark sides of food depiction. The chapter does thus not serve as a comprehensive and all-including discussion about the dark sides of the food industry. This is a rather broad subject, but the subject is earlier addressed in this essay. In the first chapter, the hidden brutal backgrounds of 17th century food still lifes is discussed. In the second chapter, commercial food depiction was mentioned, however, this was very briefly. This third chapter serves to answer the question what the most important dark sides of food depiction, or food marketing, are in the 21st century.

In order to answer this question, comparative literature research will be done and additionally, some important practical examples will be analyzed and compared to the literary sources. The most important texts that will be compared in this chapter are *Broadcasting Bad Health: Why Food Marketing to Children needs to be controlled* (2003) by K. Dalmeny et al. and *Goed Eten: Filosofie van voeding en landbouw* (2018) written by Michiel Korthals, who is already mentioned in the first chapter. The practical examples that are taken into consideration are the celebrity chef Jamie Oliver's various campaigns to raise awareness of the dark sides of the food industry, in which food depiction is a key element.

3.2: THE TRICKS AND CONSEQUENCES OF FOOD MARKETING

As was already stated in chapter 2, commercial food campaigns are a part of everyday life in the 21st century. Everywhere on the streets, varying from billboards in the city center, posters of fast food restaurants in the bus shelter to food advertising on the television and on our smart phones; we are constantly triggered by images of food. The images show depictions of all kinds of food that are depicted as beautiful as possible. At first glance, it does not sound as a bad thing to be surrounded by beautiful depictions of food every day, especially if you are a foodie. However, these overkill of every day food images are put in relation with a lot of negativity and public health problems.

Dalmeny addresses the problems of food marketing explicitly and elaborately in his text *Broadcasting Bad Health: Why Food Marketing to Children needs to be controlled* (2003). In this text he discusses the many forms and effects of food marketing across the world that is explicitly targeted at children. Despite that practically all people, which means people all across the world living in a consumer society in the 21st century, are confronted

with food photographs that show the most beautiful and delicious foods, concerns are often explicitly aimed at the food photographs and marketing that are aimed at children. Dalmeny states that food manufactures are playing a psychological game with peoples mind and are fully aware of the fact that children are particularly susceptible to the persuasion of advertising.¹⁰⁷ Besides, when manufactures targeted towards children, they often want to trigger to so-called ‘pester power’ or ‘nag factor’ of the children. This means that children would ask, or even nag to, their parents about wanting the product they saw on the advertisements, which means that the parents are also confronted with the marketing campaign of the company.

The many tricks that are used by food manufactures to sell their products are widely discussed and criticized as more and more people have become aware of the power of food advertisements. Dalmeny already addresses this growing awareness in his texts, which was written in 2003. But also later texts and articles, like *Effects of fast food branding on young children's taste preferences* (2007) by T. N. Robinson et al.; *Licensed Characters on Food Packaging Affect Kids' Taste Preferences, Snack Selections* (2010) published by Yale Daily News, show a continued grow of awareness of the tricks of food marketers.

Just like the growing number of celebrity chefs caused that the foodie movement kept increasing in popularity in both the millennial generation and generation Z, these celebrity chefs also helped raising a growing awareness of the often devious marketing tricks of food manufactures, not only in the foodie culture but to the masses. One of the prime examples of a celebrity chef that fights against the promotion of unhealthy foods and diets is the British television chef Jamie Oliver. He has made television programs like *Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution* (2010/2011), where he discloses the very unhealthy school meals in many American schools and the bad diets people have at home, often because they are uneducated about healthy foods. Oliver states that it is this lack of knowledge about good foods and the constant triggers of food marketing that are one of the main causes of obesity.

Also in 2010, Michelle Obama launched her public health campaign *Let's Move!* with the intention to fight the growing problem of child obesity. The former First Lady wanted to educate children and their parents about healthy food; just like Oliver aimed for in this television program; ensure that everybody had access to affordable healthy foods and that children would start to exercise more.¹⁰⁸ Another aim of the campaign was to raise awareness for and fight against the fast food marketing that are targeted to children.

¹⁰⁷ Dalmeny, K., Hanna, E., Lobstein, T. (2003). *Broadcasting bad health Why food marketing to children needs to be controlled: A report by the International Association of Consumer Food Organizations for the World Health Organization consultation on a global strategy for diet and health*. Retrieved on 13-08-2019 from http://www.foodcomm.org.uk/pdfs/Broadcasting_bad_health.pdf P. 5.

¹⁰⁸ Let's Move! (n.d.). *America's Move to Raise A Healthier Generation of Kids*. Retrieved on 12-08-2019 from <https://letsmove.obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/about>

Recently, in April 2018, Oliver again launched a campaign with the title *We've #AdEnough of junk food marketing*, where he also fights against the unhealthy food commercials aimed at children. There are of course many other celebrity chefs that promote healthy food, like Gina Homolka and Alice Waters, but Oliver is the only celebrity chef that explicitly fights against unhealthy food marketing and diet and the factors that are causing them, of which Oliver believes food marketing is one of the major factors.¹⁰⁹

The reason these campaigns against food marketing are still launched is because of the growing worldwide problem of obesity and diet related diseases, for which food marketers are, for a big part, often held responsible. The accusations are imaginable, regarding that it is known that food marketers can use all kinds of tricks to make the food appear as delicious as possible in the photographs and make the packaging of their products as attractive with all kinds of visuals. Bright also stated in her book that food photography, especially commercial food photography, should be critically watched. She mentions a few well known tricks of commercial food photographers, like the use of glycerin to make the food look moist; use plastic ice cubes instead of real ice cubes, because they do not melt.¹¹⁰ Other tricks are the use of motor oil as syrup, glue instead of milk, spraying deodorant on grapes to give them that dewy appearance or the use of hairspray to make drying-out cake, which can easily happen underneath hot studio lamps, look moist and freshly baked again.¹¹¹ This means that some foodstuffs that seem so delicious in the advertisements are not even edible, which could be seen as misleading with the aim to make people buy the often unhealthy foods. A well-known example of this misleading food advertising is a picture that McDonalds launched themselves of a hamburger where the advertisement photograph look very different from the actual hamburger you will get in the restaurants (image 26).

Without denying the power that food marketing can have, philosopher Michiel Korthals gives another perspective on obesity that food manufacturers are often held responsible for. In his book *Goed Eten: Filosofie van Voeding en Landbouw* (2018) he says that there are three different 'frames' from which the growing health issues can be analyzed from. The first frame sees obesity as an individual responsibility. According to Korthals, this is also the frame from which obesity is seen in many Western countries. He strengthens this statement by arguing that in The Netherlands 80% of the obese people held themselves responsible for their situation, 37% blames the food industry, 21% points to bars & restaurants, 17% to stores and 10% blames the government. Korthals says that approximately

¹⁰⁹ Jamie Oliver, (April 2018). *We've #AdEnough of junk food marketing*. Retrieved on 12-08-2019 from <https://www.jamieoliver.com/features/weve-adenough-of-junk-food-marketing/>

¹¹⁰ Bright, S. (2017). P. 13.

¹¹¹ Kamps, H. J. (March 2018). *The Dirty Tricks of Food Photographers*. Retrieved on 09-08-2019 from <https://medium.com/photography-secrets/food-photography-35a60c2f0d14>

the same percentages are to be found in the US.¹¹² The individual person is thus held responsible for his/her own obesity and it is his own task to fight it. Korthals claims that this is why there are so many weight loss programs, such as Weight Watchers or Atkins.¹¹³

The second frame sees the problem of obesity as the fault of the social and political environment people live in. This is the frame from which Jamie Oliver and Michelle Obama address the problems regarding obesity and unhealthy diets. In addition to Oliver and Obama, Korthals also states that there is a proven connection between food marketing aimed at children and obesity.¹¹⁴ This frame blames the governments for subsidizing sugar and fats, adding taxes on healthy products like fresh fruits and vegetables and building too many elevators instead of stairs. It also blames mass media, because they offer a platform for unhealthy food advertisements. From the perspective of frame 2, the food industry is seen as the biggest cause of obesity.

Lastly, the third frame puts the blame of obesity to biology; in other words, the genes of a person are to blame for obesity. Korthals hereby refers to the 158.000 stomach operations that were performed in the US in 2016.¹¹⁵ The perspective of the third frame removes the individual responsibly completely from the person that suffers from obesity.

After explaining the three frames, Korthals states that the frames overlap in practice and that it is not possible to see it clear-cut from one frame because there are many factors that determine the situations and circumstances that could cause obese. However, he does make clear that there are a few actors that are especially important regarding from which frame the situation is analyzed, he hereby explicitly refers to money. Money is often the driving force behind many decisions. As example Korthals mentions the how the pharmaceutical industry benefits from the health issues that obese causes, because many pills can be prescribed to reduce the problems, but does not solve the problem at the root. For this reason, Korthals argues that governments need to step in by directly intervene in the food industry. Examples that are mentioned by Korthals are that the government could determine the portion sizes, prohibit vending machines with junk food in school canteens and sport clubs food and stop fast food marketing that is aimed at children. He also states that his is very difficult since a lot of the big food manufactures and companies have a lot of power, that is often used to work around new rules and legislation.

¹¹² Korthals, M. (2018). *Goed Eten: Filosofie van Voeding en Landbouw*. Nijmegen: Uitgeverij Vantilt. P. 227.

¹¹³ Idem.

¹¹⁴ Korthals, M. (2018). P. 228

¹¹⁵ Korthals, M. (2018). P. 230

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the thesis, the main research question that was sought to answer was how the differences in the depiction of food in 21st century food photography and 17th century Dutch 17th still life paintings played a role in how people perceived food. In order to answer this question the essay was split up in three chapters.

The first chapter asked the question of how the social developments in the Dutch 17th century are reflected in food still life paintings and if this was of influence of how Dutch people perceived foods. This turned out to be a very fruitful topic to analyze since a lot of important events happened regarding food still life painting. In agreement with Buvelot, Pieter Aertsen is also in this research regarded as the most important figure, or founder, of the autonomous still life painting because of his innovative kitchen and market pieces. Then, in the 17th century, with the debate of Hochstrasser and Schama it became clear that the most important events after Aertsen regarding food depiction was the flourishing Dutch trade. With the emergence of the VOC and the WIC, a lot of new commodities and foodstuffs became available in the Dutch Republic and formed an inspirational source for painters. This explains why the more sober early 17th food still life paintings show merely bread, herring and beer and that the later food still life paintings, or *pronkstillevens*, show colorful porcelain and much exotic fruit. This was all possible because of the trade and painters were eager to show this nations pride. The dark side of slavery was however not shown.

The second chapter asked the question of what the differences are between food as a subject matter in painting and in photography. We came to know that the painterly compositions of food still life paintings were first copied in food photography, but as photography developed throughout the 20th and 21st century, differences start to occur. The first biggest impact that caused changes was vernacular photography and the emergence of the foodie movement, which caused an explosion in interest in and making food photographs. Another big impact was the emergence of the consumption society, in which we, with the technological innovations, are constant triggered by food photographs that show the food as splendid as possible, just like 17th century still life paintings, but with different intentions: the food industry wants us to buy cheap, fast and the unhealthy foods and are not showcasing the nation's trade pride.

The last chapter answered the question what the most important dark sides of food depiction, or food marketing, are in the 21st century. The most important dark side is that food photography is used to manipulate us, and especially children, in buying unhealthy foods, which is seen as one of the major causes for the worldwide problem of obesity and other diet related diseases.

The differences in food depiction from the 17th century until contemporary day are not effecting us like a one way street. The differences in depiction are a reflection of society in that moment in time and did not occur isolated on their own. However, in the 21st century, with are constantly faced with these food photographs that show the reflection of our society at the moment: a consumer society. Despite that we also enjoy making and seeing all these food photographs, this constant trigger is also causing us harm; because commercial food photography is also seen as one of the biggest external causes for obesity and other diet related diseases.

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IMAGES

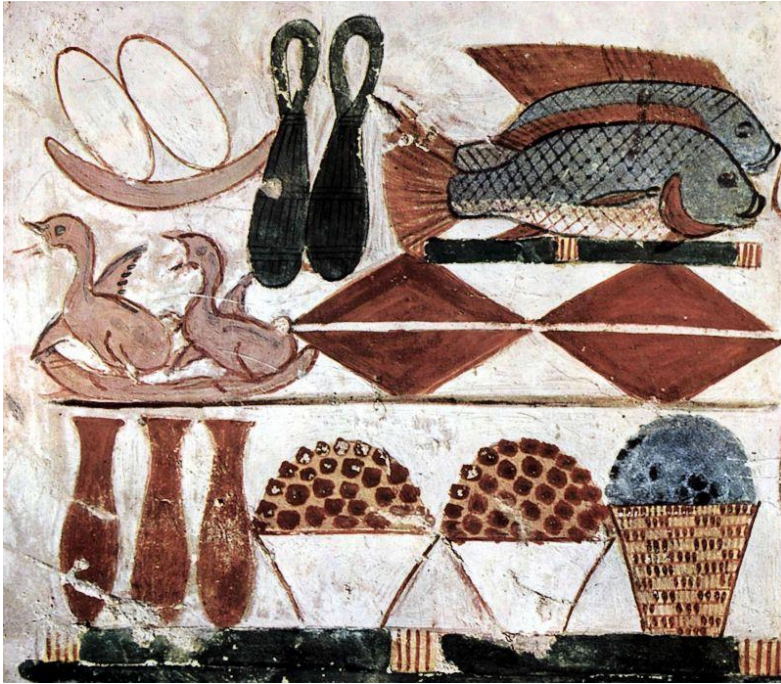


Image 1: Still life found in the Tomb of Menna, made between 1386 and 1351 BC during the 18th Egyptian Dynasty.



Image 2: *Still Life with Glass Bowl of Fruit and Vases*, made approximately in the 1st century.



Image 3: Maarten van Heemskerck, *Portrait of Pieter Jan Foppensz with his Family*, Oil on panel (118,7 x 140,2 cm), circa 1530.



Image 4: Pieter Aertsen, *De Vleesstal*, Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht. Oil on panel (124 x 169 cm), dated 1551



Image 5: Jacob Toorenvliet, *Allegory of Painting*. The Leiden Collection. Oil on copper (24,6 x 31 cm). circa 1675-79.



Image 6, 7 and 8: Various version of a baker blowing his horn made by Adriaen van Ostade.



Image 9: Jan Steen, *The Baker Arent Oostwaard and his Wife, Catharina Keizerswaard*. Oil on panel, 1658.



Image 10: Gabriël Metsu, *A baker blowing his horn*, made circa 1660-1663.



Image 11: Job Berckheyde, *The Baker*.



Image 12: Floris Claesz. van Dijck. *Still Life with Cheeses*. Private collection in Amsterdam. Oil on panel (82,2 x 111,2 cm), signed and dated 1622.



Image 13: Visual explanation with the visual analysis of image 12.



Image 14: Pieter Claesz *Herring with Glass of Beer and a Roll*, 1636



Image 15: Pieter van Roestraeten, *A Yixing teapot, Chinese porcelain cups, a sugar pot and a bowl on a partly draped table*. Oil on canvas (24,2 x 31,2 cm)



Image 16: Floris van Schooten, *Still Life with Butter and Cheeses*, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp. Oil on panel (50 x 83 cm), monogrammed.



Image 17.: Pieter Claesz, *Still Life with Roemer, Oysters and Saltcellar*, St. Louis Art Museum. Oil on panel (62,3 x 48,3 cm), monogrammed and dated 1643.



Image 18: Floris van Dijck. *Pronkstilleven met vruchten, kazen, brood en wijn* (no decent English title available, only English descriptions of the work). Oil on panel, dated 1610.



Image: 19: Joseph Nicéphore Niépce. The oldest photograph known to man. The image below shows a clarification of the scene of the photograph: the view outside of Niépce's bedroom window.



Image 20: Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre. *Still Life in Studio*. One of the first photographic still life images. Daguerreotype. 1830's.



Image 21: Albert Eckhout. *Still Life with Tropical Fruits*.



Image 22: Eugène Delacroix *Odalisque*. Oil on panel. 1857.



Image 23: Left: Picture of Adolphe Braun. Right: Painting of Gustave Courbet: *Château de Chillon*.



Image 24: William Henry Fox Talbot, *A Fruit Piece*, 1845



Image 25: Tim Walker, *Lily Cole and Cake Tree*. 2004.

RESTAURANT PREP TIME	ADVERTISING PREP TIME
<p>APPROX 3 MINS TO ASSEMBLE BY OUR DEDICATED CREW</p>	<p>APPROX 4 HOURS WITH HELP FROM: LIGHTING FOOD STYLIST PHOTOGRAPHER EDITING PHOTOSHOP</p>



Image 26: McDonalds food marketing.