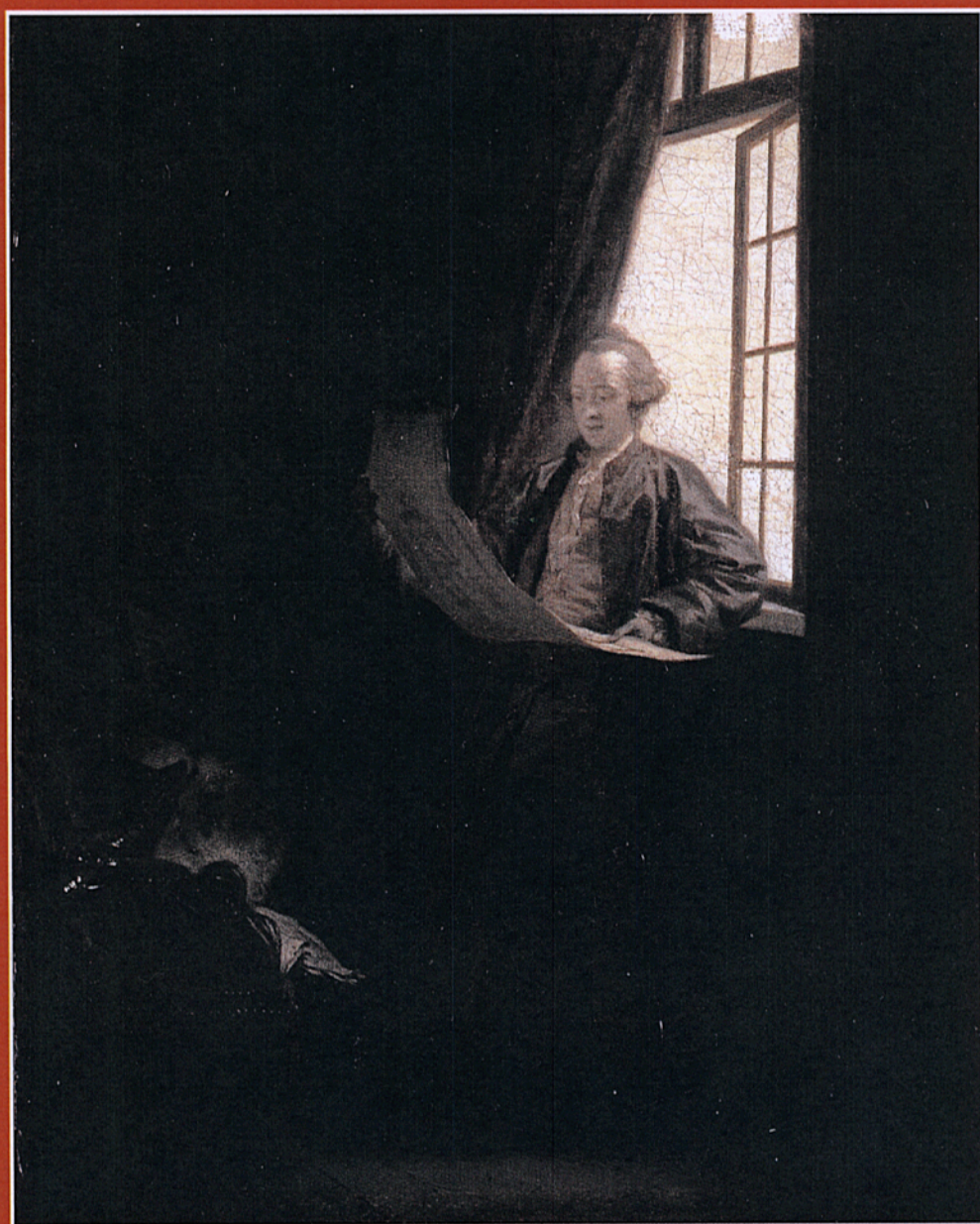


# LES ÉCHANGES ARTISTIQUES ENTRE LES ANCIENS PAYS-BAS ET LA FRANCE, 1482-1814

Édité par Gaëtane Maës et Jan Blanc



BREPOLS

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Actes édités par GAËTANE MAËS et JAN BLANC

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# J. van Beecq, Amsterdam marine painter, “the only one here [in France] who excels in this genre”

Gary Schwartz

*In fond memory of Beatrijs Brenninkmeijer and Antoine Schnapper*

The first and last piece of primary research into the life of the artist who is the subject of this paper was conducted in the mid-19th century by the redoubtable naval historian Augustin Jal (1795–1873). In his *Dictionnaire critique de biographie et d'histoire*, published in Paris in 1867, Jal devotes six fully packed columns to our man.<sup>1</sup> The equivalent of one column is taken up with laments on how little is known of an artist who was so important in his time. A painter to King Louis XIV, a member of the Académie royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, a protégé of important patrons. Jal recounts mournfully his correspondence with the French and Dutch authorities he consulted in vain for more information about our artist.

One hundred and forty-one years later, Jal's complaint echoes still. No one has added to the biographical information that Jal culled from the archives in the years before 1867. Aside from a few entries in exhibition catalogues, lexicons, and survey books, no attention has been devoted to him by art historians. Most of his paintings are in the trade and have never been published. The vagueness of our information begins with the artist's very name. Although he was a Dutchman, he is known historically only by a French name, in two versions: Jean-Charles-Dominique or Jean-Charles-Donat van Beecq (with and without hyphens). In the literature, he is however nearly always referred to by the supposed Dutch versions of these names: Jan Karel Dominicus van Beecq and – most frequently – Jan Karel Donatus van Beecq. The signed paintings and prints offer no help in this regard. The signatures read *J. Van Beecq*, *JVBeecq*, or *I. Van Beecq*.<sup>2</sup> In a notarial statement of 1686 (see below), he is called Jean Van Beecq. Another pertinent piece of evidence on this question is a note on the artist written by

the bookseller, art dealer, and art historian Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774), who claims to have known van Beecq personally. As published in 1851–1853 by Charles-Philippe de Chennevières and Anatole de Montaiglon, this reads, in translation:

BEECQ (JEAN CHARLES DOM. VAN), Dutch, painter of marines, settled in France where he was received in the Royal Academy of Painting. He worked for the king. I knew him; he lived at the time in the mansion of M. de Vandosme, grand prior of France [Philippe de Vendôme, grand prior of the knights of Malta], to which [household] he was attached. Died on 29 May 1722.<sup>3</sup>

The accuracy of this publication is however not certain. In his own citation of the entry by Mariette, Jal quotes from the *Dictionnaire général des artistes anciens et modernes* by J.B.D. Lempereur (1795), with the heading “BEECQ (Jean Van)”, lacking any further first name.<sup>4</sup> There are other differences between the two citations, of which the most important is that the Jal/Lempereur version lacks the key sentence “I knew him”. To my knowledge, no one has checked these divergent quotations against Mariette's original documents in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Another weighty, contemporaneous piece of information about van Beecq is the report of his death in the minutes of the Académie meeting of 30 May 1722.

The death of Monsieur Vambecq, painter, born in Amsterdam, has been reported to the Company, which took place on the 19th of the month of April this year, at the age of nearly 84 years.<sup>5</sup>

This places the artist's birth in Amsterdam in mid-1638. However, no such birth is

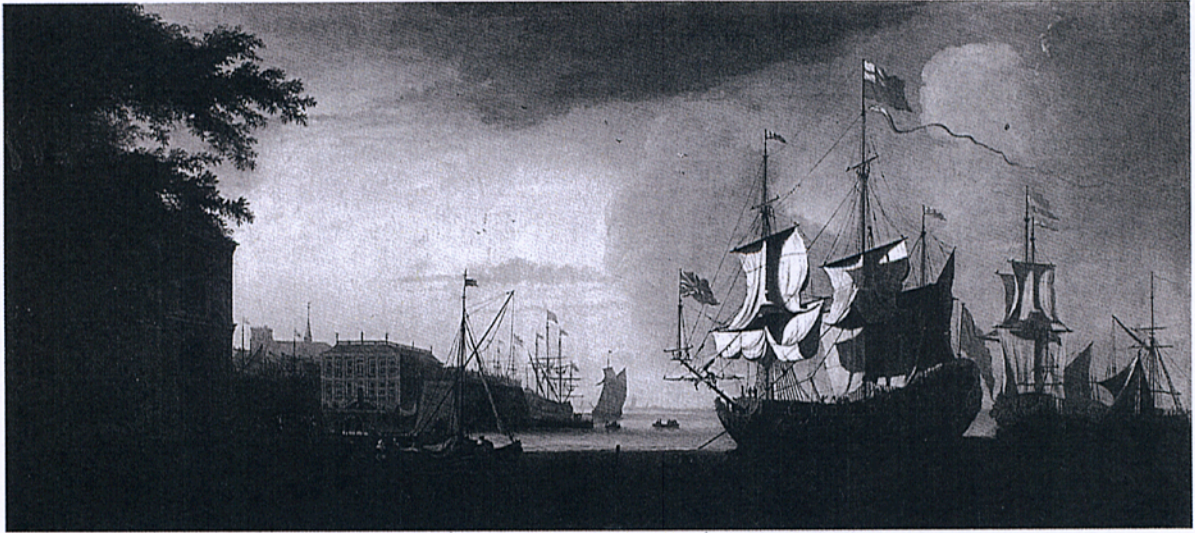


Fig. 1. J. van Beecq, *English shipping beside a harbour, possibly a capriccio of Hull*, signed and dated *JVBeecq/1677*. Canvas, 82x183.5 cm. Sale London (Sotheby's), 13 July 1994, lot 5.

recorded in Amsterdam, leaving that matter too up in the air.<sup>6</sup> The Amsterdam birth registers do however help in judging the respective claims of Dominique versus Donat in the artist's first name. Between 1600 and 1650, the records mention 22 children or fathers named Dominicus, and not a single one called Donatus, Donatius, or Donat. To be on the safe side, in this article the artist is called by the name by which he signed, J. van Beecq.

There is a lot more that we do not know about van Beecq. What we *do* know about him makes him one of the prime examples of Dutch-French artistic exchange, albeit in one direction, of the late seventeenth century. The documentary evidence for this consists of material that is seldom encountered in the Netherlands: letters of recommendation that specify the motives for certain acts of patronage, minutes of meetings of the Académie that hint at political interference in the workings of that body, linkages between artistic expressions and affairs of state. This adds to the interest of his case. Considerations of this kind played a role everywhere in Europe at the time. But in the surviving documents in France, they are spelled out more clearly than in the Dutch Republic.

Before reviewing van Beecq's career in France it is important to know what he was doing before he arrived here in 1680. His early years are shrouded in mystery. The earliest dated painting, a *capriccio* view of Antwerp

harbour, is from 1673, when he was fully thirty-five years old.<sup>7</sup> Presumably his earlier paintings are unsigned and so closely resemble the marine paintings of other, better-known artists, such as Ludolf Backhuysen and Willem van de Velde, that they are catalogued among their works. Locations that have been recognized in his paintings, aside from Amsterdam, are Rotterdam, Antwerp, Greenwich, and Hull, suggesting that he did a certain amount of sailing in North Sea waters.

When van Beecq was thirty-four years old and presumably working in the Netherlands as a fully accomplished painter of ships, disaster struck. In April 1672 the Republic was attacked by France, England, the bishop of Münster, and the archbishop of Cologne, in a war that lasted six years and wrecked the Dutch economy. The market for art collapsed. A number of artists who were able to left the country. Among them were father and son Willem van de Velde, who went to work for the English enemy. Among the motifs in their repertoire were battles in the Third Anglo-Dutch War that drove them out of their country. Within a short time of their arrival, the van de Veldes were taken into royal service by Charles II, Willem the Elder for "taking and making Draughts of Sea Fights" while his son was responsible for "putting the said Draughts into Colours".<sup>8</sup> They were also commissioned to provide models for tapestries of sea battles for the tapestry factory of Mortlake.

Perhaps not until a few years later, van Beeck followed the same path as the van de Veldes. His paintings of the years 1677-1679 depict predominantly English motifs.<sup>9</sup> One of his major achievements of this period is a painting of English shipping in a harbour, possibly a *capriccio* of Hull (fig. 1). This work contains a repeating feature in his compositions, the presence of palatial, classicist buildings lying directly on a harbour. In addition to his depictions of warships and battles at sea, this is the main iconographic distinction of his work.

In 2008, for the first time, van Beeck's activity in England was confirmed from the archives. Richard Johns of the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich has published documents concerning a foreign artist in London who is undoubtedly identical with van Beeck. In the papers of the Painter-Stainers Company of London, where foreign artists were required to register in order to work in the capital city, Johns found two entries mentioning a certain "Vanbeck". He was admitted to the society on 7 November 1677.<sup>10</sup> Then, in an entry of 6 March 1678, the Company clerk "noted of Vandest that 'he lives with Vanbeck in Durham Yard'".<sup>11</sup> The reference is to Adriaen van Diest (1655-1702), a native of The Hague who moved to London in 1672/1673 at the age of 17.

This new reference is of particular interest. Adriaen van Diest was the son and grandson of the two main seascape painters from The Hague, Willem van Diest (before 1610-in or after 1668) and Jeronimus van Diest (1643?-in or after 1677).<sup>12</sup> Jeronimus was only a few years older than van Beeck, but he died young, around the time that his son was lodging with van Beeck in London. Although Willem van Diest has not yet been named as the possible master of van Beeck, there is nothing in our artist's repertoire as a painter that could not have been learned from that accomplished master, who painted battles at sea as well as more pacific marines. The van Diest connection suggests as well that van Beeck may not have come from Amsterdam but The Hague or its surroundings. A comparison between two paintings of English warships by Jeronimus van Diest and van Beeck shows how close they were. Van Diest's painting, in the Rijksmuseum, shows the English flagship *The Royal Charles* after its capture by the Dutch in June 1667 (fig.

2). The inscription indicates that the painting was made for the family of the leader of the expedition, Cornelis de Witt (1623-1672). Van Beeck painted a sister vessel, *The Royal Prince*, on the roads of Greenwich (fig. 3). The resemblances between them are not unique. Parallels can easily be found in the work of Willem van de Velde and others. But they make the point that van Beeck was capable of creating naval images in the higher realms of national prestige in a mode also cultivated by Jeronimus van Diest.

Why, by 1680, van Beeck left England for France we do not know. The reason for the move cannot have been economic. The economy of England was on the rise in 1680. Considering the elevated patronage that was immediately bestowed on him upon his arrival in France, it seems more likely that he was invited, with attractive commissions as a draw. A personal connection that he enjoyed early on in his French period may provide a clue to the initiators of the invitation. On 20 April 1681, van Beeck signed (as *J. Van Beeck*, no help there) as witness to the marriage in Paris of Joseph Yvart (1649-1728) to Anne Barreau. The painter Joseph Yvart was the son of Baudrin or Baudouin Yvart (1611-1690), a friend and associate of Charles Le Brun (1619-1690). Both father and son were closely tied to the Gobelins tapestry plant, where first Baudrin and then Joseph served as "garde des tableaux, dessins, modèles et cartons".<sup>13</sup> Van Beeck too had close ties to Le Brun and was named on several occasions in connection with tapestry design and manufacture. If we assume that van Beeck, working in relative obscurity in London, will have required an intermediary to come to the attention of Le Brun, there are no other documented candidates for this role than father and son Yvart. Their interest in van Beeck would have lain in his ability to design compositions of sea battles. Land battles were already being woven at the Gobelins factory after the designs of another artist from the Low Countries, Adam Frans van der Meulen (1632-1690). However the connection may have come into being, van Beeck's tie to the Yvarts brought him into the family sphere of both Adam Frans van der Meulen and Le Brun himself. Baudrin Yvart was the godfather of van der Meulen's daugh-



Fig. 2. Jeronimus van Diest, *The seizure of the English flagship Royal Charles, captured during the raid on Chatham, June 1667*, signed I.V.D. Canvas, 68x103.5 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. nr. SK-A-1389.

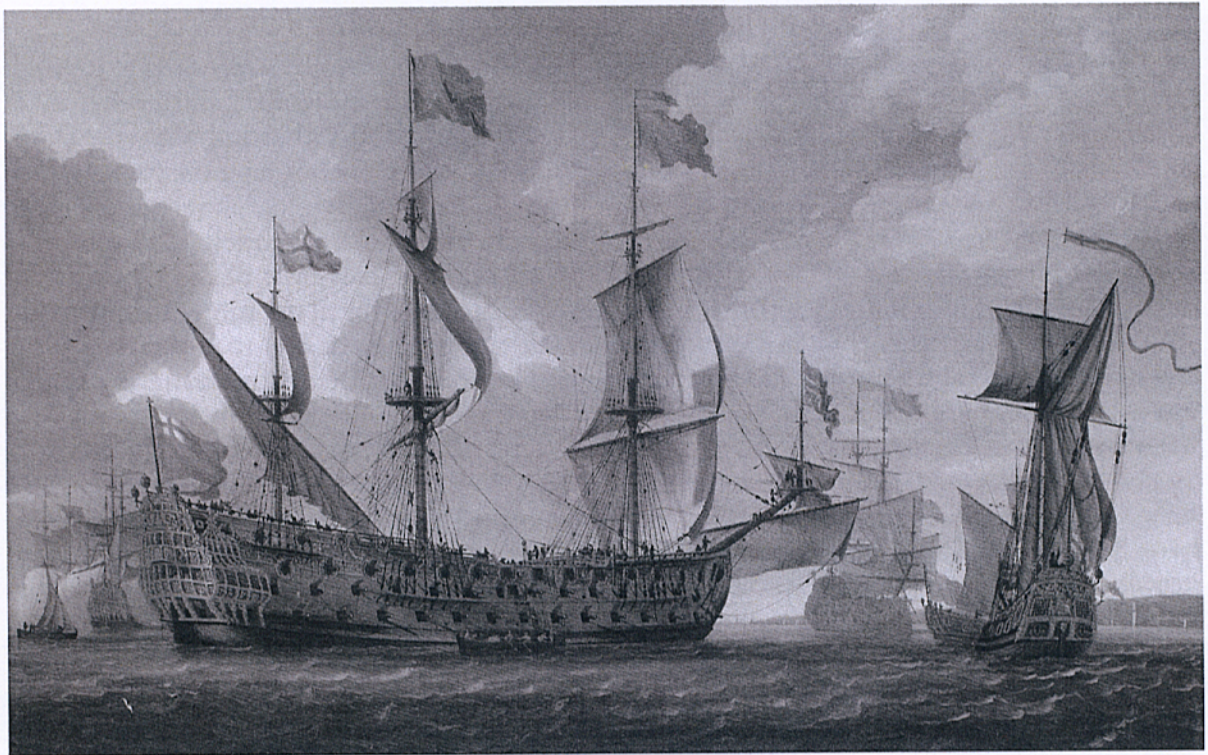


Fig. 3. J. van Beecq, *HMS Royal Prince before the wind*, signed and dated I.V.BEECQ 1679. Canvas, 56x90 cm. London, Greenwich, National Maritime Museum, inv. nr BHC0976.



ter Marguerite (1674), while in 1681 van der Meulen married a cousin of Le Brun's, Marie de Bye.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, van Beeq's admittance to the Académie royale de Peinture et de Sculpture took place under the hands-on supervision of Charles Le Brun himself. In the meeting of 27 July 1680, at which Le Brun was present, Monsieur Vambec, as he was always called in various spellings, presented a large painting of an unspecified maritime subject.<sup>15</sup> He was requested to submit a work of normal dimensions, and to show a study for it at the first meeting to come. This was on 3 August 1680. At that session van Beeq's study was approved and he was requested to submit the full-size painting for the approval of none other than M. Le Brun. The finished work, a sea with several vessels ("une mère avec divers vaisseaux"), was shown to the Académie on the 26th of April 1681, again in the presence of Le Brun, founder and patron of the august body. The painting was approved and van Beeq installed as a member. Le Brun then pressured the Académie into presenting van Beeq with the complete amount of his entry emolument, which was otherwise never paid out at once in full. There were "important reasons" for this, which Le Brun explained to the meeting but which are unrecorded in the minutes.

From the next documentary mention of van Beeq we can surmise what the important reasons were. In early 1685, the art-loving naval official Esprit Cabart de Villermont (1628?-1707) wrote a letter recommending van Beeq to the attention of Jean-Baptiste Antoine Colbert (1651-1690), the marquis de Seignelay, son of the great Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683) and dynamic secretary of the navy. Cabart de Villermont was writing on behalf of Admiral Abraham Duquesne (ca. 1610-1688) as well as himself. Of van Beeq he writes:

He has a fixation about getting the marquis de Seignelay to want to own one of his works. Since he is the only one here who excels in this genre and there are four of his paintings at Marly, of which one represents *Algiers bombarded by night* and another *The cannonade of Chios*, and the two others in the same mode, the marquis could, if the painter's style pleased him, order an historical

series of all the maritime expeditions conducted by him or upon his orders. When I have the honour of seeing you, I will tell you about an idea I had on the subject, which it might not be impossible to get the king interested in. I'm thinking of drawings for tapestries of naval actions which would inform posterity of the services of the marquis, so valuable to the nation, so full of glory for the king and himself.<sup>16</sup>

The decoration of Marly, which was begun in 1679, was the responsibility of Le Brun and of Jules-Hardouin Mansart (1646-1708). Putting two and two together, we can surmise that Le Brun and Mansart had appointed van Beeq to work for the king at the new palace of Marly in 1680, and that his protectors felt that it was important for him to be accepted as a member of the Académie. Indeed, in 1663 Le Brun himself had pushed through "an edict from the King's Council, forbidding any non-member of the Académie royale to use the title of Peintre du Roi", a title that van Beeq had already earned and that he used for the rest of his life, with the exception of a period in the 1690s when he was expelled from the academy (see below).<sup>17</sup>

*The cannonade of Chios* has been preserved, in the Musée de la Marine in Paris (fig. 4). It is the only existing painting by van Beeq for which we have a documentary record from his lifetime. A French squadron of men-of-war, flying white flags, has lined up at the entrance to the harbour of Chios, the chief city of the island of that name, then part of the Ottoman Empire and lying a mere seven kilometres off the Turkish coast. The object of the operation is to neutralize a fleet of Tripoli pirates who enjoyed Ottoman protection. The action is described this way in a book on the English ambassador to the Sublime Porte from 1672 to 1681, Sir John Finch (1626-1682):

So the famous admiral [Abraham] Duquesne was sent with a squadron to scour the Mediterranean. His orders were to seek and destroy the pirates wheresoever he found them. After sweeping everything before him farther west, Duquesne entered the Archipelago. The Grand Signor's Captain Pasha met him with his Fleet and asked what he came into these seas for. The Frenchman



Fig. 4. J. van Beecq, *The cannonade of Chios by Admiral Abraham Duquesne on 23 July 1681*, 1684, Paris, Musée national de la Marine, inv. nr. 1 OA 10.



Fig. 5. J. van Beecq, *The meeting of the French fleet under Admiral d'Estrée and the English fleet under the duke of York, before the battle of Solebay, May 1672*, Paris, Musée national de la Marine, inv. nr. 1 OA 9D.

quoted his orders. “Nay,” said the Turk, “the Grand Signor will never allow the Tripolines to be attacked in his own ports.” “We shall see about that,” replied Duquesne, and made for Chios, where four Tripoli men-of-war and four petaches lay careening with their guns all ashore. The Admiral sailed into the port (July 13, 1681) and, without any ceremony, went for the disarmed pirates. They fled into the Grand Signor’s Castle, which fired two guns. Duquesne retorted with thirty, and a message that, if the Grand Signor’s Castle protected them, he would knock it down about the ears of the Grand Signor’s garrison. The Turks, terrified, desisted from further acts of hostility, turned the Tripolines out, and sent word to the Admiral that they would remain neutral. Duquesne then set to work: in four hours, and at the expense of 8000 shots, he disabled the Tripoline vessels..., slaying about 300 of their crews and, incidentally, doing some damage to the town.<sup>18</sup>

Van Beeq’s composition bears considerable correspondence to this description, down to the specified number of ships. The topography of Chios harbour is also recognizable in the painting, as the reader can convince himself with a glance at Google Earth and some of its pictures of the coast. The form of the harbour moles, the walls surrounding the former castle (in the painting it is in the dead centre of the composition and seems to have taken some hits) and the constellation of inland hills are clearly recognizable. The artist must have disposed of accurate drawings of the situation he was painting.

In style and disposition, the *Cannonade of Chios* is a characteristic and highly accomplished example of the Netherlandish seascape as practiced widely throughout the century. In attention to detail, finesse of brushstroke, and the addition of small human touches, the painting may have less charm than the best works of van Beeq’s contemporaries, which is probably part of the reason why the artist has received so little attention in museums and among art historians.<sup>19</sup> This I consider unjust not only from the historical point of view, for an artist with such an interesting career, but also in terms of artistic achievement. The differences in quality between van Beeq and

Willem van de Velde are visible, but marginal. Van Beeq too commanded mastery of draughtsmanship, perspective, and colour and possessed detailed maritime knowledge. The same qualities are manifest in a second painting by van Beeq in the Musée de la Marine, which although undocumented may well have been one of unnamed two compositions painted for Louis XIV at Marly. Usually booked as a pendant to the *Cannonade of Chios*, this painting shows another historic moment in French maritime history, the joining of the fleets of Comte Jean II d’Estrées and the duke of York in May 1672, in an anti-Dutch alliance (fig. 5). The subsequent battle of Solebay, where the Anglo-French fleet was surprised by the Dutch admiral Michiel de Ruyter, was inconclusive, but this did not detract from the successful joining of the two fleets, in defiance of the Dutch, and its diplomatic significance.

The procedure by which van Beeq acquired materials for his paintings of naval actions is revealed in the letter by Cabart de Villermont quoted above. He and Abraham Duquesne had put van Beeq to work on a painting of a new legendary bombardment of a city by the admiral. The letter is addressed to an unidentified high functionary in the ministry of the navy; Cabart asks him for “the drawing of Genoa that you had made on the spot”<sup>20</sup> – on the spot, that is, when the city of Genoa was attacked from the sea in May 1684 by Duquesne, with on board the flagship the marquis de Seignelay and also the staff member to whom Cabart was writing. Van Beeq sought to create an image of the attack that would be as accurate and recognizable to participants as his painting of Chios at Marly.

The proposals in the letter for a series of paintings and for tapestries of battles at sea seem never to have gone into fulfillment. However, the bombardment of Genoa, a controversial action because France was not at war with Genoa when Duquesne fired 13,000 shells into the city, was painted by van Beeq, acquired for Marly and published in a major print by the engraver-publisher Moyse Jean-Baptiste Fouard (1653–1726; fig. 6).<sup>21</sup> Jal found two references to a painting by van Beeq of this subject belonging to the king, from 1706 and 1709–1710. The former document gives the dimensions as a large 7 feet 1 inch high by



Fig. 6. Moysse Jean-Baptiste Fouard after J. van BEECQ, *The bombardment of Genoa by Admiral Abraham Duquesne on 24 May 1684*, engraving in two plates, 80.7x129.6 cm. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Estampes, AA7, notice nr FRBNF40494794.

10 feet 1½ inches wide.<sup>22</sup> A smaller version was recorded in a sale in Paris in 1811.<sup>23</sup> Neither has been recorded since that date.

The print of the bombardment of Genoa, a demonstration of the global reach of French power and the effectiveness of terror bombing against civilian populations, is dedicated in a somewhat peculiar way to the young Colbert.

To Monseigneur the Marquis de Seignelay [...] This print depicts a ray of the justice of the Master of land and sea, the wise conduct of his minister, and the chastisement of a too proud Republic. Monseigneur, you know how to use bursts of terror to teach fear and respect to the most distant nations. But the painting I make will look neither accurate nor true to life to future centuries if you do not agree to allow me to release it to the public under the protection of your name. I most humbly supplicate you to grant this favour to one who, with all due respect and veneration, is your very humble and very obedient servant, J. Van BEECQ, painter to

the king, of the Royal Academy of Painting etc.

Painted by J. Van BEECQ for the Most Christian King and published with royal privilege.<sup>24</sup>

The peculiarity of the inscription lies in the fact that it is not really dedicated to the addressee. Van BEECQ supplicates the marquis de Seignelay for permission to dedicate it to him, permission that was lacking when the engraving was printed. The royal privilege and the fact that the painting was acquired by the king made insufficient impression on Jean-Baptiste Antoine Colbert. Or did it? The Bibliothèque nationale de France lists another impression of what seems to be the same print, with a completely different inscription and a dedication to the marquis de Seignelay.<sup>25</sup>

No subsequent commissions or acquisitions of work by van BEECQ in court circles are known. The only recorded sale of work presumed to be his was to “Joseph Auguste chastelain de Bruge, cheval. seign<sup>r</sup> de La



Fig. 7. Moysse Jean-Baptiste Fouard after J. van Beecq, *Cortes's vessels disabled and grounded by his orders*. From Antonio de Solis, *Histoire de la conquête du Mexique ou de la Nouvelle Espagne* (Paris: Antoine Dezallier, 1691), between pp. 194 and 195. Private collection.

Bernière” on 28 February 1686 of unspecified “marchandises de tableaux”. The buyer was to pay half of the purchase price of 1500 livres within six months and the rest within a year. “S<sup>r</sup> Jean Van Beecq, peintre ordinaire du Roy”, was then residing in Paris in what Jal transcribes as “rue du Sannet (Sansonnnet), et paroisse Saint-Benoist”.<sup>26</sup>

In 1690 Cabart de Villermont attempted once more to place van Beecq with the marquis de Seignelay. This time he approached as intermediary Michel Bégon (1638–1710), like himself a high-ranking, art-loving official in the French navy. Bégon, whose cousin Marie Charron was married to Jean-Baptiste Colbert and was the mother of Jean-Baptiste Antoine, was intendant of the shipyards of Rochefort and a major collector of prints, medals, curiosities, and books.<sup>27</sup> This attempt, which concerned in addition to drawings of ships a

mysterious invention, stranded when the marquis de Seignelay died later that year.<sup>28</sup>

Michel Bégon lent support to van Beecq down to 1693, when he wrote to Cabart de Villermont that he was eager for news about “the new machine of M. van Beecq”.<sup>29</sup> Apparently van Beecq busied himself not only with painting but also with technical inventions that would have been of interest to the navy. Cabart’s letter of 1685 refers to another invention in which van Beecq may have been involved. Urging his correspondent to lend support to the creation of tapestries commemorating naval victories, he wrote, “I have a means of facilitating that which the workers find most difficult to execute and incompatible with the manufacture of high [perpendicular] and low [longitudinal] warp, that is the rigging. Through my means they will easily be able to render vessels and galleys in such a way

that they need not miss the slightest manoeuvre, whether stationary or moving".<sup>30</sup>

The approach to Bégon concerned not only paintings, tapestries, and inventions but also drawings of Dutch vessels for Bégon's collection of drawings of ships. On 27 May 1690 he wrote to Cabart: "I have received the drawings of yachts and other Dutch vessels drawn by M<sup>r</sup> Vanbeck, for which I thank you. Although they are too small to be entered into the collection that I am having made of different kinds of marine vessels, they will not be without usefulness, since my draughtsman can enlarge them. The volume I have is one of the largest folios in existence, much larger than the Atlas".<sup>31</sup> The catalogue of the Bibliothèque nationale de France lists a volume of this description that came from the collection of Bégon, without however mentioning its dimensions.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to their shared professional interests, Esprit Cabart de Villermont and Michel Bégon also had intellectual pursuits in common. Among them were the study of the New World and its history. It may be due to their intervention that a history of Mexico published in French translation in Paris in 1691 was adorned with illustrations engraved after designs by van Beecq. The existence of this material was noted by Pierre-Jean Mariette and was included in the form of quotations from his notes in Roger-Armand Weigert's inventory of 1961 of French engravings in the Bibliothèque nationale.<sup>33</sup> Until now the actual prints have remained unpublished. The present author found them 35 years ago in Antoine de Solis, *Histoire de la conquête du Mexique ou de la Nouvelle Espagne*, translated from Spanish and published in numerous editions from 1691 on.<sup>34</sup> Since then the prints in the book have been catalogued by the Bibliothèque nationale under nr. FRBNF38495300, where the identity of the artist however goes unrecognized. Illustrated here is the one print that is inscribed with the name of van Beecq: *Vaisseaux de Cortez desagrées et échouez par ses ordres* (fig. 7). The imprint reads *I. Van Beecq ping. M. Fouard sculp.* Some later editions of the book contain engravings by a lesser hand than Fouard's.

After 1691, van Beecq's protection in France dropped even lower. No new commissions are recorded, and his professional standing was

challenged. He was never the model of a good academician, attending meetings infrequently, and on 6 November 1694 he was actually expelled from the Académie, thereby losing the right to the prestigious title *peintre du roi*. One assumes that this would not have happened had the artist commanded proper protection. His major patron, Charles Le Brun, had died in 1690 (as had Baudrin Yvart and Adam Frans van der Meulen), but in 1683 Le Brun had already fallen from power as dictator of artistic policy and institutions. Fortunately for van Beecq, Le Brun's former partner as artistic director of Marly, Jules-Hardouin Mansart, was still alive. His star was rising and he was still favourable to the Dutchman. At least, that seems the most likely explanation for the reinstatement of van Beecq on 7 December 1697. At that meeting, the board issued a mealy-mouthed statement claiming that van Beecq's truancy was due to his "ignorance of the regulations" ("l'ignorance des Règlements") of a body of which he had been a member for fourteen years. "The first time he takes part in a meeting, he will repeat these same excuses." ("La première fois qu'il prendra séance dans l'assemblée, il réitérera les mesme excuses.") Excuses? On 7 June 1698, when van Beecq attended his first assembly since his expulsion, he "attested to the Company that he was extremely angry that the Company had suspected him of disregarding the regulations, which he had always respected and that he would take all care to avoid that anything ever happen again that would displease him".<sup>35</sup>

The reinstatement seems to anticipate the appointment of Mansart as protector of the Académie on 7 February 1699. On 2 January 1700, when the Académie sent off its annual new year's delegation to its protector (in this case a new centennial greeting), van Beecq was one of those invested with the dignity. He attended only one other meeting after that, on 30 July 1701. On that occasion too he exercised an honourable function, as member of the cash committee appointed to control the books ("la reddition des comptes"). In 1715, for reasons we do not know, van Beecq left Paris. From then until his death in 1722, he is listed in the records as "absent".

Mansart died in 1708. By that time or shortly thereafter, van Beecq had acquired a new main patron. In his entry on the artist in the

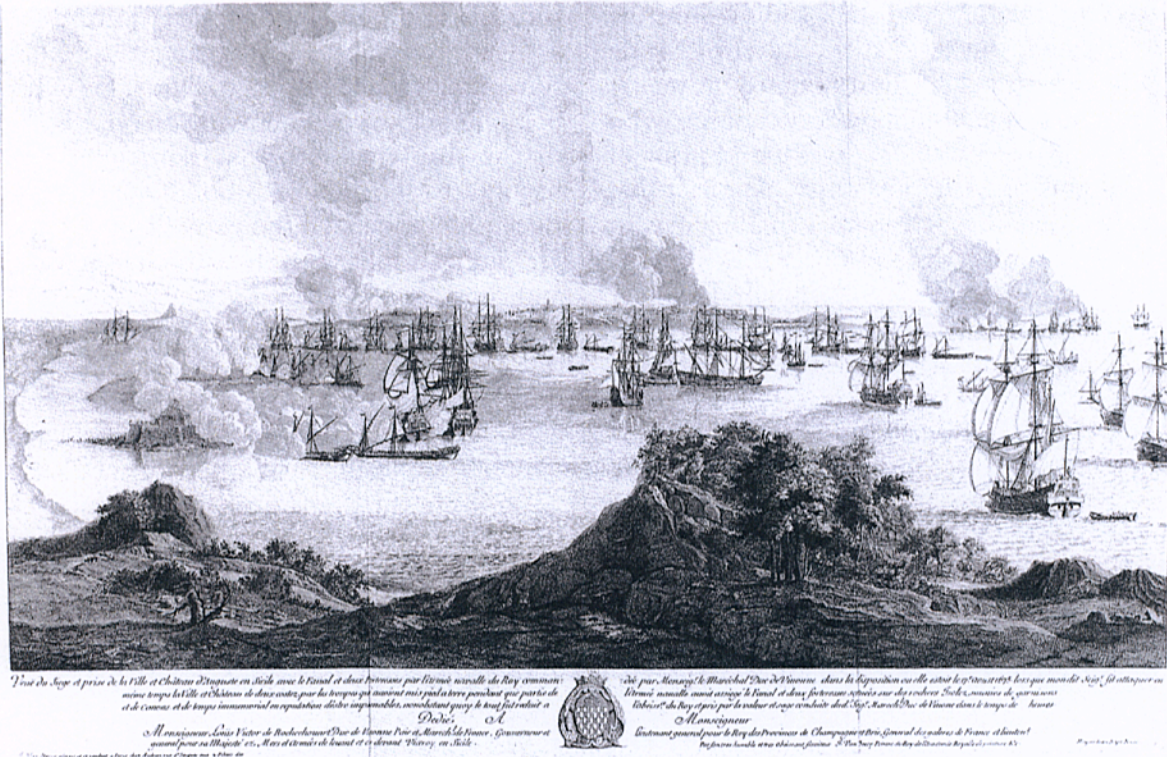


Fig. 8. Moysse Jean-Baptiste Fouard after J. van Beecq, *The battle of Augusta, Sicily, 1675*, engraving, 56.5x89.5 cm. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Estampes, AA3.

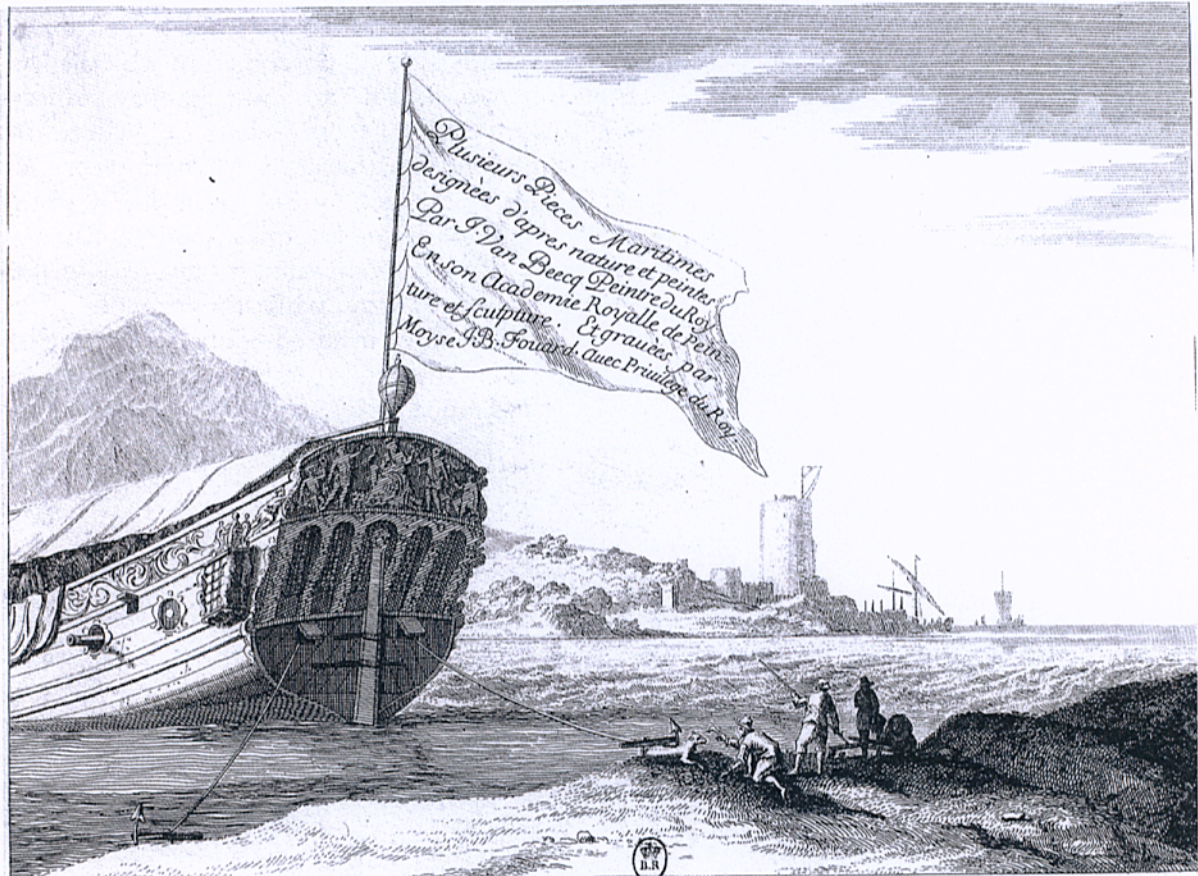


Fig. 9. Moysse Jean-Baptiste Fouard, title print of "*Plusieurs Pièces Maritimes Par I. Van Beecq Peintre du Roy en son Academie Royale de Peinture et sculpture. Et gravées par Moysse J.B. Fouard. Avec Privilège du Roy*". Engraving, ca. 23x31.5 cm. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Estampes, AA3.

*Abecedario*, Mariette wrote, "I knew him; he was living at the time at the hôtel of M. de Vandosme, grand prieur de France, in whose service he was".<sup>36</sup> Philippe de Vendôme, who lived from 1655 to 1727, was grand prior of the knights of Malta in France. The fact that he extended protection to van Beecq is in keeping with the artist's position in the French military-artistic complex. There are however no works by van Beecq dated after 1701; we do not know what if any work van Beecq executed for the grand prior.<sup>37</sup>

Van Beecq's designs for prints are also military in nature. In collaboration with Moyse Jean-Baptiste Fouard, van Beecq designed not only a print of the bombardment of Genoa but also one of Augusta, Sicily, attacked on 17 August 1675 (fig. 8). It too is dedicated to the commander of the operation, in this case not Abraham Duquesne but Louis-Victor de Rochechouart, duc de Vivonne (1636-1688). His only known book illustrations show the Spanish conquest of Mexico. A small album of prints by Fouard after van Beecq, with the title *Plusieurs pieces maritimes*, shows almost entirely gunships (fig. 9).<sup>38</sup>

From the Dutch perspective, J. van Beecq was a competent but not exceptionally gifted follower of masters like Willem van Diest and Willem van de Velde. He failed to establish a career in his own country and disappeared from the scene without leaving a single documentary trace there, by present knowledge. In England, where he was registered as a member of the Painter-Stainers Company, he worked as an epigone of the van de Veldes.

It was in France where, known as Jean or Jean-Charles-Dominique van Beecq, he came

into his own, albeit for a brief period. His activity there can be seen as an artistic extension of the French import of Dutch knowhow in building its navy. Following up on the work of the shipwrights of Saardam who were brought to Rochefort to build warships, van Beecq memorialized the exploits of the fleet. He plunged into the job with energy, relish, and considerable talent. However, despite the early support of Charles Le Brun on the art side and Abraham Duquesne and Esprit Cabart de Villermont of the navy, his career foundered. Van Beecq was left to his own devices, which were insufficient to establish a lasting position. In the single quotation attributed to him in the records, his remarks to the Académie royale de Peinture in June 1698, he comes across as a rancorous and undiplomatic individual. This might have had something to do with his inability to consolidate his early successes in France by proper playing of the patronage game. (Adam Frans van der Meulen did better, but only by betraying Charles Le Brun, which van Beecq did not.)

The story of van Beecq in France is one of failed French-Dutch rapport and missed chances. There were no good reasons why the various painting, design, and tapestry projects advanced by Esprit Cabart de Villermont should not have succeeded. There were only bad reasons, such as the inaccessibility of the marquis de Seignelay, but sometimes bad reasons drive out good ones. It remains as well to be explained why, while the example of the van de Veldes inspired centuries of English seascape painters, J. van Beecq had no followers in France.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Augustin Jal, *Dictionnaire critique de biographie et d'histoire: errata et supplément pour tous les dictionnaires historiques d'après des documents authentiques inédits*, Paris, 1872, pp. 165–168. Most of the research for the present contribution was conducted in the early 1970s. Since then the author has been unable to find the opportunity to continue his research in Paris, where, he is convinced, more documents concerning van Beeccq are waiting to be found.

<sup>2</sup> Two exceptions known to me are a painting sold in London (Sotheby's), 3 May 2000, lot 2, said to be signed *Jan van Beeccq* and one sold in Amsterdam (Christie's), 10 November 2008, lot 85, said to be monogrammed *J: D: B:*. Seen in the context of about 15 other signatures that are all variants on *J. Van Beeccq*, these departures from the norm give reason to question the accuracy of those transcriptions or attributions.

<sup>3</sup> Ph. de Chennevières and A. de Montaiglon, *Abecedario de P.J. Mariette et autres notes inédites de cet amateur sur les arts et les artistes*, Paris, 1851–1860, 6 vol., I, p. 99: “BEECQ (JEAN CHARLES DOM. VAN), Hollandois, peintre de marines, est venu s'établir en France, où il a été reçu en l'Académie royale de peinture. Il a travaillé pour le Roy. Je l'ay connu; il logeoit pour lors à l'hotel de M. de Vandosme, grand Prieur de France, auquel il estoit attaché. Mort le 29 Mai 1722.” Predating this publication was one by L. Dussieux in Ph. Le Bas, *France: dictionnaire encyclopédique*, Paris, 1840–1845, 15 vol., II, pp. 68–71: “Liste de tous les membres de l'ancienne Académie des beaux-arts, depuis sa fondation en 1648 jusqu'en 1793.” The author calls his list an “Extrait des registres de l'ancienne Académie des beaux-arts. Cette liste est un travail entièrement neuf.” The listing for van Beeccq is given as: “1681, [...] 26 avril [...] Jean-Charles-Donat Van Beeccq, p. mar... [Mort.] 1722, 19 mai. [Age.] 84.” “P. mar.” stands for “peintre de marines”. Judging by the tabular format of the publication, this would seem to be a work of compilation from the minutes of the Académie royale rather than a transcription of a single document. The table is recapitulated in another typographic form in Ph. de Chennevières, *Archives de l'art français: recueil de documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire des arts en France*, Paris, 1851–1860, 6 vol., I, p. 370: “VAN-BEECQ Jean-Charles-Donat, P. de marin., né à Amsterdam; † 84 ans, 19 mai 1722.” The publication is signed by L. Dussieux, who writes, “Nous avons déjà publié, en 1840, dans l'Univers pittoresque (Dictionnaire encyclopédique de l'histoire de France), en collaboration avec M. Ph. Le Bas, la liste des membres des deux Académies de peinture et d'architecture, d'après les registres et les papiers de ces deux sociétés. De nouvelles recherches faites par M. Duvivier, de l'Ecole des beaux-arts, et par moi, me permettent de publier de nouveau ce travail, avec de très-nombreuses modifications et additions.” Transcriptions of the actual records in which van Beeccq is mentioned were published later in the nineteenth century by Anatole de Montaiglon, *Procès-verbaux de l'Académie royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, 1648-1793*, Paris, 1875–1909, 11 vol., II (1878), pp. 169–170 (27 July 1680), 178–179 (4 January 1681), 187–188 (26 April 1681), 372–373 (3 April 1688), 373–374 (24 April 1688); III (1880), pp. 151–152 (6 November 1694), 221–222 (9 November 1697), 234–235 (31 May 1698), 235 (7 June 1698), 251 (7 February 1699), 252 (12 February 1699), 268 (6 July 1699), 285–286 (2 January 1700), 320 (30 July 1701); and IV (1881), p. 334 (30 May

1722). In none of these entries is the first name of the artist given, not even an initial. My assumption is that Dussieux derived the name Donat from a misreading of Mariette's manuscript. Since the 1850s writers on the artist have had their choice of calling him Jean-Charles-Donat or Jean-Charles-Dominique. The entire publication of the *Procès-verbaux* from 1648 to 1793 is available in various formats on the internet archive site of the University of Toronto. Vol. 1 is at <http://www.archive.org/details/procsvverbauxde-01acaduoft>. For subsequent volumes, substitute the volume number (02, 03 etc.) for the 01 in the url.

<sup>4</sup> Jal 1872 (see note 1), p. 166, right col. The work cited by Jal would seem to be a three-volume manuscript by Jean Baptiste Denis Lempereur in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, dated 1795, listed in the online OPALE catalogue as notice nr FRBNF40367539.

<sup>5</sup> “La mort de M<sup>r</sup> *Vambeeccq*, Peintre, né à Amsterdam, a été notifiée à la Compagnie, qui est arrivée le 19<sup>e</sup> du mois d'Avril de cette année, âgé de près de quatre vingts quatre ans.” See reference in note 3.

<sup>6</sup> See the online baptism registry of the city of Amsterdam from 1564 to 1811 at <https://stadsarchief.amsterdam.nl/archieven/archiefbank/indexen/doopregisters/zoek/index.nl.html>. A search on the name van Beeccq, with fuzzy spelling, for the years 1630–1645, to be on the safe side, yields the birth of only one boy who bore that family name, a Jacob van Beeccq born in 1643.

<sup>7</sup> Sale London (Sotheby's), 16 April 1997, lot 61.

<sup>8</sup> Jeroen Giltaij and Jan Kelch, *Praise of ships and the sea: The Dutch marine painters of the 17th century*, (exhibition cat., Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen; Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie im Bodemuseum, 1996–1997), Rotterdam, 1996, p. 412, in biographical entry on Willem the Elder by Friso Lammertse.

<sup>9</sup> Among the nine examples known to me are: *English warships at sea in a fresh breeze*, signed *J. van Beeccq*, oil on canvas, 79x132 cm., Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst, inv. nr KMSsp657 and *English warships in a roadstead in calm weather*, signed and dated *J. van Beeccq 1677*, oil on canvas, 79x132 cm., inv. nr KMSsp657; *Two warships off Greenwich*, signed and dated *J. van Beeccq 1677*, oil on canvas, 156x138 cm., sale London (Sotheby's), 18 November 1987, lot 5; *H.M.S. Royal Prince before the wind*, signed and dated *I.V. BEECQ 1679*, oil on canvas, 56x90 cm., Greenwich, National Maritime Museum, inv. nr BHC0976; *English ship of the line*, signed and dated on reverse *J. Van Beeccq pt. AD. 1679*, oil on canvas, 90x54 cm., Valletta, Malta, National Museum of Fine Arts.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Johns, “Framing Robert Aggas: The Painter-Stainers' Company and the ‘English School of Painters’”, *Art History*, 31 (2008), pp. 322–341. “Many others [i.e. other artists] are known today by name only, among them [...] ‘Vanbeck’ of Durham Yard, admitted in 1677, their presence noted without fanfare amid the everyday business of the Company. The inclusion by the Company's clerk of a painter's address is rare but revealing, suggesting a tendency for stranger painters to lodge in Westminster, beyond the official jurisdiction of the Company, and thus indicating the voluntary nature of their affiliation.” P. 331, citing Guildhall

Library MS 5667/2 (part 1, f. 225). The dates of this and the following document are not mentioned in Johns's article. The author was kind enough to communicate them to me. Although Johns did not make the connection with van Beecq in his article, he did so in a paper he delivered at a symposium in the National Maritime Museum on 14 November 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Johns 2008 (see note 10), p. 341, note 53, citing Guildhall Library MS 5667/2 (part 1, f. 228).

<sup>12</sup> Edwin Buijsen, "Familie Van Diest", in Edwin Buijsen, *Haagse schilders in de Gouden Eeuw: het Hoogsteder lexicon van alle schilders werkzaam in Den Haag 1600-1700*, The Hague and Zwolle, 1998, pp. 118-122.

<sup>13</sup> Unsigned article in Thieme-Becker.

<sup>14</sup> Isabelle Richefort, "Nouvelles précisions sur la vie d'Adam François van der Meulen, peintre historiographe de Louis XIV", *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Français*, 1986 (1988), pp. 57-80.

<sup>15</sup> For references to van Beecq in the Académie, see note 3.

<sup>16</sup> Jal 1872 (see note 1), p. 165: "Il a une grande passion que mons<sup>r</sup> le marquis de Seignelay voulust avoir quelqu'un de ses ouvrages. Comme il est le seul ici qui excelle en ce genre, et qu'il y a à Marly quatre de ses tableaux, dont l'un représente *Alger bombardé la nuit*, un autre, *la Canonade de Chio*, et les deux autres de mesme espèce, mond. s<sup>r</sup> le marquis pourroit, si la manière luy agréee, se donner une suite historique de toutes les expéditions maritimes qui ont esté executées ou par luy en personne ou par ses ordres. Quand j'auray l'honneur de vous voir, je vous diray une pensée que j'ay la dessus, et qu'il ne seroit peut estre pas impossible de faire gouter au Roy pour des dessins de tapisseries, d'actions navales qui informeroient la postérité du ministère de mondit s<sup>r</sup> le marquis si utile à l'Etat, et si glorieux au Roy et à luy..."

<sup>17</sup> Claire Constans, in Jane Turner (ed.), *The dictionary of art*, 1996, 34 vol., XIX, p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> G. F. Abbot, *Under the Turk in Constantinople: a record of Sir John Finch's embassy, 1674-1681*, London, 1920, reprint: Alcester, 2008, pp. 340-341.

<sup>19</sup> Two egregious examples: Fernand Engerrand, in his *Inventaire des tableaux du roy rédigé en 1709 et 1710*, par Nicolas Bailly, Paris, 1899, doubts the very existence of van Beecq, wondering whether he might be a confused reference to Ludolf Backhuysen. And the standard monograph on Dutch marine painting, L.J. Bol, *Die holländische Marinemalerei des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Braunschweig, 1973, contains no reference to van Beecq whatever.

<sup>20</sup> "Il ne faut pas que j'obmetter ici, Monsieur, que nous avons, M<sup>r</sup> Du Quesne et moy, fait suspendre le travail que fait, pour le Roy, le peintre des marines dont nous vous parlames dernièrement, dans l'espérance que nous luy avons donnée que vous voudrez contribuer à l'exactitude de son ouvrage par la communication que vous nous offrites pour luy de dessein de Gennes que vous avez fait faire sur le lieu." Jal 1872 (see note 1), p. 165, right column.

<sup>21</sup> R.A. Weigert, *Inventaire du fonds français. Graveurs du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, 1939-, 17 vol., IV (1961), pp. 272-273. The entries are under the lemma devoted to Fouard, on whom Weigert provides more interesting information from Mariette, including the remark "Il ne grava rien de considérable, si l'on en excepte ce qu'il a gravé d'apr. J. Van Beecq..." Fouard's main occupation was in the draughtsmen's studio at Versailles. An interesting publication of his in the present context is catalogued in the Bibliothèque nationale de France as "Plan de la Ville de Tripoli en Barbarie, attaquée par l'Armée Navale du Roy,

commandée par le Mareschal d'Estrées Vice Admiral de France le 22 de Juin 1685 reduite a l'obeissance de sa Majesté le vingt cinq du mesme mois", notice nr FRBNF40582542. It was included in the atlas *Les glorieuses conquêtes de Louis le Grand roy de France et de Navarre dédiées au roy*, based on maps by Sébastien de Pontault de Beaulieu.

<sup>22</sup> Jal 1872 (see note 1), p. 166, quotes from "l'*Inventaire général des tableaux originaux qui appartiennent au Roy*, 1706. (Arch. de l'Emp., Ms. E. 9833). Je lis dans ce document: "*Van Beck*. Un tableau représentant le bombardement de la ville de Gênes par l'armée navale de France, ayant de hauteur 7 pieds 1 pouce sur 10 pieds 1 pouce ½ de large; dans sa bordure Dorée".

<sup>23</sup> Sale Paris, 2-11 December 1811, (expert: Regnault; commissaire-priseur: André), lot 3: "Beecq (J. Van), *Bombardement de Gênes par l'escadre de Duquesne, en 1684*, sur toile, H. 39 p. 8 l., Larg. 68 p. 8 l.", sold on 2 December 1811 to "Second". The seller was "Ozanne ingénieur". Getty Provenance Databases: Sale Catalogue F-332. Lugt number 8087.

<sup>24</sup> "A Monseigneur le Marquis de Seignelay [...] Cette estampe représente un rayon de la justice du Maistre de la terre et de la Mer... Vous avez sceu, Monseigneur: par la terreur des foudres de sa Majesté imprimer la crainte et le respect aux Nations les plus éloignées. Mais la peinture que j'en fais ne parestra ni fidelle ni véritable aux siècles à venir, si vous n'avez agréable de me permettre de la donner au publique sous la protection de votre nom.

Vostre très humble et tres Obeissant Serviteur J. Van Beecq Peintre du Roy, de l'Academie Royale de Peinture &c.

J. Van Beecq pinxit pro Rege Christianissimo et Excudit Cum privilegio Regis."

<sup>25</sup> "Veuë de la ville de Genes et de l'armée navale du Roy dans la disposition ou elle estoit le 24<sup>e</sup> jour de may entre 1 et 2 heures apres midi, lorsque les bâtimens qui avoient porté les troupes à la descente de St Pierre d'Arena en revinrent apres avoir esté les maîtres de ce magnifique fauxbourg pendant 7 ou 8 heures et avoir mis en fuite les troupes espagnoles et genoises au nombre de 4 à 5000 hommes qui y estoient retranchez pour le deffendre." Notice nr FRBNF40494794. This is information of a kind that can only have come from someone like Cabart de Villermont's correspondent at the ministry. The online catalogue of the Bibliothèque nationale de France mentions two states, one with and one – like the one illustrated here – without the address of Fouard.

<sup>26</sup> Jal 1872 (see note 1), pp. 167, left and p. 168, right col. Quoted by Jal from "Minutes de Barbar, dernier jour de février 1686, chez M. Grosse, notaire à Paris". I presume that the insertion of Sansonnet is Jal's and that "et" is a typographical error for "en".

<sup>27</sup> Frits Lugt, *Les marques de collections de dessins & d'estampes*, Amsterdam-La Haye, 1921-1956, 2 vol., I, p. 63, nr 360.

<sup>28</sup> Jal 1872 (see note 1), p. 167.

<sup>29</sup> Jal 1872 (see note 1), p. 167, right col.: "J'attendrai avec impatience le retour du voyage que vous devez faire pour savoir le succès de la nouvelle machine de M<sup>r</sup> Van Beck."

<sup>30</sup> "J'ay un moyen de rendre aisé ce que les ouvriers trouent de plus difficile dans l'exécution et incompatible dans la fabrique des hautes et basses lisses, qui sont des cordages, et par lequel ils pourroient avec facilité agréer les vaisseaux et les galères, de sorte qu'il n'y manqueroit pas la moindre manœuvre, soit fixe, soit coulante." Jal, p. 165, right col.

<sup>31</sup> “J’ay receu les desseins de yacs et autres bastiments hollandois dessinés par M<sup>r</sup> Vanbeck, dont ie uous remercie. Quoy qu’ils sont trop petits pour entrer dans le recueil que ie fais faire des différentes sortes de bastiments de mer, ils ne laisseront pas d’être vtils parce que mon dessinateur pourra les mettre en grand. Le volume que j’ay est un des plus grands in folio qu’on voye, beaucoup plus grand que l’Atlas.” Jal 1872 (see note 1), p. 167, right col.

<sup>32</sup> Bibliothèque nationale de France, notice nr FRBNF40340262 in the online catalogue: “36 pl. de dessins à l’encre, 6 gravures; [divers]... Volume provenant de Michel Bégon, Intendant de la Marine à La Rochelle (1688) et contenant des dessins originaux représentant des vaisseaux et des galères du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: vaisseaux, frégates, flûtes, polacres, saïques, barques, tartanes martingales, aleoges d’Arles, galéasses, galère royale de 30 bancs, galère patronne, galiotes, felouques, gondole vénitienne, ponton à deux cuillères pour creuser, et à la fin du volume quelques gravures par Nicolas de Poilly.”

<sup>33</sup> Weigert 1961 (see note 21), nrs 71–75 (“Vues et Histoire du Mexique”) and 76 (“Combat sur le lac du Mexique...”).

<sup>34</sup> Antoine de Solis, *Histoire de la conquête du Mexique ou de la Nouvelle Espagne*, first published in Spanish in 1684, edition Paris: Antoine Dezallier, 1691. The print illustrated is between fols. 144 and 145. The online catalogue of the Bibliothèque nationale de France identifies the translator as S. de Broë, seigneur de Citry et de La Guette. It also lists an edition from the same year published by Boudot in Paris.

<sup>35</sup> “M. *Vambecq*, estant venu en cette assemblée pour la première fois depuis son rétablissement, a tesmoigné à la Compagnie qu’il estoit extrêmement fâché que la Compagnie l’eust soupçonné d’avoir eu du mépris pour ses Règlements, qu’il (l’)avoit toujours respectée et qu’il apporteroit tous ses soins pour empêcher qu’il ne luy arrivait rien qui luy peût déplaire.”

<sup>36</sup> See note 3, with the reservation concerning Mariette’s claim to have known van Beecq. Since Mariette was born in 1794 and van Beecq left Paris in 1715, the younger man could not have been older than eleven years old when he met the artist, if he did.

<sup>37</sup> It is worth noting in this connection that a painting by van Beecq is preserved in the National Museum of Fine Arts in Valletta, depicting an English warship in full profile, like the painting of the Royal Prince: *English ship of the line*, oil on canvas, 54x92 cm., inv. nr 857–8 P/431, purchased by the National Museum from the Bellanti Collection in Malta in 1929. It is signed and dated on the back of the canvas *J. Van Beecq pt. AD. 1679*. The Bellanti are a Malta family of lawyers and artists. With thanks to Theresa Vella of the museum for this information.

<sup>38</sup> Weigert 1961 (see note 21), nrs 1 (Augusta) and 59–64 (“Plusieurs Pièces Maritimes...”). Weigert’s nrs 65–70 (“Six Veues de mer et de vaisseaux...”) would seem to refer to the same set as 59–64.

# Crédit photographique

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