

Clara Peeters' Knife:  
The social context of a wedding-knife in seventeenth-century still-life painting.

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## Introduction

In six still-life paintings by the seventeenth-century Netherlandish artist Clara Peeters, the same ornate silver table-knife rests in the foreground of a well-laid table.<sup>1</sup> The placement of the knife is carefully arranged. The sharp tip of the blade recedes into space and the handle faces outward towards the viewer. In each of the six paintings, the handle is never obscured by other objects. This positioning highlights the artist's name that is 'engraved' upon its side.

The knife, and interpretations of this object, are discussed in much of the scholarship on Peeters. Scholars tend to agree that the object depicted is a wedding-knife. This fact is interesting as this knife is thought to be the only known depiction of a wedding-knife in still-life paintings of this era. Through a review of this scholarship, I have noted three methodologies commonly used to interpret the presence of this knife: formal, iconographic, and biographical. While some of the scholarship takes a single approach, most scholars blend approaches to arrive as an interpretation of this object.

Scholarship which uses a formal interpretation tend to suggest that the meticulous rendering of the knife's detail was Peeters' method of flaunting her technical abilities. For example, in 1975, Ralph Warner wrote a simplistic description of her knife, calling it "tour-de-

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<sup>1</sup> The six paintings are listed in Alejandro Vergara, *The Art of Clara Peeters*. Antwerp: Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 2016, p. 13, note 5. This catalogue includes five of the works, "Table with Cloth, Salt Cellar, Gilt Standing Cup, Pie, Jug, Porcelain Plate with Olives and Cooked Fowl" c.1611, (Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado); "Still life with Tart, Silver Tazza with Sweet, Porcelain, Shells and Oysters" c. 1612-13 (Russia, private collection); "Still life of Fruit and Flowers" c. 1612-13 (Oxford, The Ashmolean Museum); "Still life with Cheeses, Almonds and Pretzels" c. 1612-15 (The Hague, Mauritshuis); "Still life with Cheeses, Shrimp and Crayfish" c.1612-13 (Antwerp, private collection). The sixth painting is not included in the Prado catalogue, but instead is listed in, Pamela Hibbs Decoteau, *Clara Peeters, 1594 - ca. 1640, and the Development of Still-Life Painting in Northern Europe*. (Lingen: Luca-Verl., 1992), pp. 42-43, ill. 29, "Cheesestack" (Location unknown). Decoteau dates this painting as c. 1630s.

force.”<sup>2</sup> In 1999, Julie Hochstrasser has a more nuanced view of the Peeters’ artistic motivations. Hochstrasser suggests that the inclusion of the artist’s name on this knife demonstrates the intensity of her labor and at the same time cleverly places her presence within the scene.<sup>3</sup>

Scholarship which uses an iconographic lens tends to focus on the imagery depicted on the knife handle as a way of unveiling the meaning of the entire painting. For example, in 1983, Sam Segal consulted the iconographic handbook of Cesare Ripa to translate the depiction of the allegorical female figures on the handle of the knife. He contrasts the meaning of these figures with other depictions on the handle, such as the flaming heart. He ultimately interprets this knife as alluding to the religious quarrel between Catholicism and Protestantism that was prevalent in Peeters era.<sup>4</sup>

Most frequently, this knife is used to garner biographical details of the artist, which are then used to speculate an interpretation of why she included this object in her scenes. The reason for this may be motivated by the lack of uncontested documentation of Peeters’ life. To date of this writing, her date of her birth, location of her practice and from whom she received artistic training is still unknown. When using this object to draw out biographical details, two common questions arise. Firstly, it is uncertain if Peeters owned this knife, as it was common for still-life artists of her era to observe prints in lieu of physical objects.

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<sup>2</sup> Ralph Warner, *Dutch and Flemish Flower and Fruit Painters of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries* 2d ed. / preface and addenda by Sam Segal (Amsterdam: B.M. Israël, 1975), 163.

<sup>3</sup> Julie Berger Hochstrasser, “Feasting the Eye,” in *Still-life Paintings from the Netherlands: 1550-1720* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1999), 81.

<sup>4</sup> Sam Segal, *A Fruitful Past: a Survey of the Fruit Still Lifes of the Northern and Southern Netherlands from Breughel till Van Gogh* (Mijdrecht, Netherlands: Drukkerij Verweij, 1983), 62-3.

In figures 7 and 8, each of the six depictions of the knife are placed side-by-side. In this format, it is easy to see the striking similarity of both knife placement and orientation in each painting. In the three detail views of figure 7 there is some variation in the angle of the knife. And in figure 8, the knife angle is remarkably similar. Based on the expected period that each work is made, there is about a ten-year gap of time between the creation of some of these paintings. Considering this gap of time and similarity of angle, it seems likely that Peeters observed either a print or painted reference of this object.

However, three scholars believe that Peeters observed an actual object that she owned. In 1992, Pamela Decoteau notes tiny differences in the depiction of the details on the knife handle as reason to believe that Peeters observed an actual knife.<sup>5</sup> In 1993, Marjorie E. Wieseman also notes that Peeters precise repetition of the knife is a reason to believe that Peeters observed an actual owned object oppose to a print.<sup>6</sup> And in 2016, Anne Lenders concludes that because the same knife appeared repeatedly, the artist must have worked from an actual object in her possession.<sup>7</sup>

Underlying this inquiry is whether or not this knife is evidence of the artist's marriage. As will be explained in chapter 2, during Peeters era, knives engraved with a woman's name were common gifts given to brides. Ownership of this object therefore, might infer something about Peeters' life and potential meaning of the painting.

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<sup>5</sup> Pamela Hibbs Decoteau, *Clara Peeters, 1594 - ca. 1640, and the Development of Still-Life Painting in Northern Europe* (Lingen: Luca-Verl., 1992), 21, 42, 96.

<sup>6</sup> Marjorie E. Wieseman in her analysis of "Still-life with Tart...", (fig. 3) in *The Age of Rubens* (Museum of Fine Arts in association with Ghent, 1993), 529.

<sup>7</sup> Anne Lenders, "Clara Peeters Lays the Table. Objects and Food through the eyes of seventeenth-century viewers." In *The Art of Clara Peeters* (Antwerp: Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 2016), 57.

Ownership might also enlighten the meaning of her name engraved on the side of the handle. What can be deduced by her name on the handle is the second common question that arises when using this knife as a means of understanding Peeters biography. What complicates the inclusion of her name is that still-life artists often signed their paintings in novel locations. Meaning, Peeters name on the handle could only be her method of signature, or this could be her faithful reproduction of an object she actually owned.

Each of these three methodologies are good considerations for devising an interpretation of this knife. The formal and iconographic approaches mentioned touch on important aspect of Peeters life. Although nothing about her training is known, it is certain that she developed her artistic skills in a region where artists and patrons sought depictions of naturalism. Technical ability would have been viewed as a strength for an artist in her day and it is possible that patrons paid more for works that demonstrated this level of ability. It is also true that Peeters lived in a time and region with many religious conflicts and it is likely that religion was an important part of the artist's life.

The questions of authenticity and ownership of the object are equally important as knowing the answers could illuminate Peeters' artistic motivations. However interpreting objects an artist depicts as a source of biographical data can be a fraught inquiry and should be introduced with a healthy dose a skepticism. One such example of a problematic interpretation of Peeters' knife comes from the 2016 catalogue of an exhibition of the artist at the Prado in Madrid. Authors Alejandro Vergara and Anne Lenders interpret the hand-shaped hallmark that Peeters depicted on the blade of her knife as proof of the artist's location. This hallmark, the authors state, proves that the knife is was made in Antwerp. While it is never outright linked,

the implication is that Peeters was from, lived and worked in this city. The larger argument the authors make is that since the blade was made in Antwerp, this places Peeters' place of work in Antwerp.<sup>8</sup> As will be discussed in chapter 3, knives in this era were widely circulated throughout Europe, and there were often a number of artisans involved in their making. What the hallmark might only prove is the origin of the blade itself and could easily have no intimate connection to the artist. It is declarations such as this place limitations on scholarly inquiry of Peeters, but also limit larger perceptions of artist and artistic motivations.

While these questions are a positive start for interpretation of this knife the focus on technical virtuosity, religious influence, ownership and authenticity offer a limited view of this object. Important areas not addressed in scholarship to date are the social significance of this knife, and the artistic motivations which compelled Peeters to include this object in her work. In the past few years, there has been a rise of exhibitions highlighting Peeters' work. The accompanying exhibitions catalogues have observed other objects features in her still-life compositions through the material culture theoretical lens. This paper seeks to take the same multifaceted view of Clara Peeters' knife. Each of the following chapters will focus on a single aspect of the knife. Combined, these individual examinations will culminate in a nuanced view of this object. This in turn may suggest why Peeters included this specific knife in six of her paintings.

Chapter one will review the origin of the table-knife in still-life painting from the Low Countries. To put the table-knife in context, this chapter will review this history of the meal still-life and the artistic and cultural influences which developed this genre.

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<sup>8</sup> Vergara, *The Art of Clara Peeters*, 13, 57, 75, 80-81.



Chapter two will investigate the social importance of the wedding-knife in the Low Countries in the seventeenth century. The history and daily usage of the table-knife and the wedding-knife will be introduced, as well as the possible table-manners and customs which regulated these objects. Understanding how table-knives were used and viewed by society can better inform why artists such as Clara Peeters included these objects in so many works.

Chapter three will take a closer look at the knife that Peeters depicted and will consider the details that can be known about this object. A comparison of her knife to extant versions of knives similar in design brings additional questions about the knife she depicted. In addition, this chapter will review the interpretations of the design of her handle and will consider what this design might tell us about the artist and the visual culture of her day.

While the confirmed knowledge about Clara Peeters is limited, one thing that is certain is she was an early frontrunner in the development of the meal still-life. Harris and Nochlin state that fewer than five food pictures in the Netherlands can be securely dated before 1608 when Peeters painted her first work.<sup>9</sup> In other words, Clara Peeters was a pioneer of the early meal still-life painting. And most impressively, her artistic contributions were continued by the subsequent generations of meal still-life artists. This is atypical for women artists of this era. While it is true that women at this time were allowed to develop professional artistic practices and join their local artist guild.<sup>10</sup> The societal expectations of women often limited their

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<sup>9</sup> Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists, 1550-1950*, first edition (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1976), 131.

<sup>10</sup>Pamela Hibbs Decoteau, *Clara Peeters, 1594 - ca. 1640, and the Development of Still-Life Painting in Northern Europe* (Lingen: Luca-Verl., 1992), 9.

potential of achieving notable success.<sup>11</sup> Therefore it is no small feat that Peeters entered the male-dominated profession of painting and implemented her personal vision; a vision that was carried forward by later male artists. Clara Peeters is exceptional for her development of a professional practice that is rich with unique markers of her artistic sensibilities.

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<sup>11</sup> For example, women typically relied upon the financial help from either their spouse or their father or brothers as paid labor for women only offered a low wage. Married women were expected to be the primary childcare providers. And this is one theory of what halted Peeters practice.

## Chapter 1

### *The Table-Knife in Early Still-Life Painting of the Netherlands*

Still-life paintings first emerged in the Netherlands at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, vignettes of precisely posed and meticulously rendered objects have a longer history within Northern European art. One may recall the 15<sup>th</sup> century depictions of banquet tables by the Limbourg Brothers, or the vases filled with lilies in work by Robert Campin. What distinguishes 17<sup>th</sup> century still-life depictions from these earlier eras is the exclusion of the figure and landscape elements. And is it these exclusions which make these so-called 'independent still-life' paintings revolutionary for their time.

Although these paintings appeared around 1600, the Dutch term *stilleven* was not used until after 1650. Prior to this term, these paintings were described by the objects featured in the composition.<sup>12</sup> The earliest terms used to describe these depictions of tables set with various foodstuffs and wares are 'breakfast-piece,' and 'banquet-piece.' Clara Peeters was one of the first artists to make such paintings and the six works which feature her ornate table-knife can be categorized within these two types. As an early producer of this type of painting, Peeters contributed many innovations to this genre. And while her particular silver knife is thought to be the only depiction of a wedding-knife, Peeters inclusion of a table-knife is in keeping with artistic choices made by her peers.

The table-knife is a common object found in the early meal still-life paintings by Netherlandish artists. In the study of still-life history there are only a few English language texts that have made note of the prevalence of the knife. In his 1950 study, J. G. Van Gelder makes a

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<sup>12</sup> J. G. van Gelder, *Ashmolean Museum [oxford]: Catalogue of the Collection of Dutch and Flemish Still-Life Pictures*. (Oxford: The University Press, 1950), 1.

list of the general objects frequently depicted in breakfast-piece paintings, one of those objects noted are knives.<sup>13</sup> And in 1956, Ingvar Bergström, states that breakfast-piece tables often incorporate a knife that is positioned with its blade pointing inwards which increases the sense of depth. He too does not question why these knives are frequently depicted, but he does note that knives create strong diagonal lines.<sup>14</sup>

It is only the later scholarship on the history of still-life history that begins to question the prevalence of the table-knife. Wouter Kloek considers why knives are often depicted teetering over the edge of the table. He concludes that these knives had no iconographic meaning and like Bergström, believes that the artistic intention of this this placement was to reinforce the illusion of depth. He views this depiction to be a marker of artistic technical accomplishment.<sup>15</sup> Sam Segal has perhaps laid the most groundwork on the general study of the table-knife. In *A Prosperous Past*, he notes the frequency of monograms or other markings on the blade of table-knives in early still-life paintings. And although he raises the question of the significance of these markings he does not follow with a discussion or conclusion.<sup>16</sup> In addition, Segal notices the repetition of a specific table-knife with a white and black checkered handle in multiple paintings. For this design, he offers an interpretation. As an extension of Segal's larger argument that the objects within still-life paintings communicate either religious or moralistic meaning, he interprets the colors on this handle as symbolic of good and evil.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Gelder, *Ashmolean Museum*, 15.

<sup>14</sup> Ingvar Bergström, *Dutch Still-Life Painting in the Seventeenth Century*. [1st American ed.] (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1956), 99.

<sup>15</sup> See Kloek Wouter, "The Magic of Still Life," in *Still-life Paintings from the Netherlands: 1550-1720* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1999), 42, 44.

<sup>16</sup> Sam Segal and William B Jordan, *A Prosperous Past: The Sumptuous Still Life in the Netherlands, 1600-1700* (SDU Publishers, 1988), 45.

<sup>17</sup> Segal, *A Prosperous Past*, 64.

To begin to build an understanding of the artistic motivations that influenced Clara Peeters decision to depict her silver knife, the question of why the table-knife is prevalent in still-life paintings of this era is important to consider. As we do not have any documentation on the artist, including from whom she trained, looking to larger artistic trends can provide insight to her choices. Equally important, as Peeters was active in the early stages of the still-life genre, it is necessary to consider the artistic developments that influenced the creation of the independent still life. While the inclusion of the table-knife has not been studied at length, there is much scholarly discussion suggesting the precursor of meal still-life paintings are 16<sup>th</sup> century genre scenes. And in fact, Wouter Kloek notes the similarity between knives depicted in 17<sup>th</sup> century still-life and 16<sup>th</sup> century genre scene paintings.<sup>18</sup>

To consider the question of why the table-knife was a commonly depicted, this chapter will analyze depictions of knives in the artworks that led to the development of independent still-life painting, as well as early artworks of the breakfast and banquet-piece genres. This visual analysis will pay close attention to the type of knife depicted as well as how the object is placed within the scene.

Many scholars have pointed to 16<sup>th</sup> century genre scenes that focus on depictions of food to be the precursor of the independent meal still-life. Zoran Kwak notes a more expansive list of forerunner paintings. He includes peasant feasts, history paintings, family portraits, and civic-guard militia banquets.<sup>19</sup> The works most often noted are the kitchen and market scenes

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<sup>18</sup> Kloek, "The Magic of Still Life," in *Still-life Paintings from the Netherlands*, 43.

<sup>19</sup> See Zoran Kwak, "From Kitchen Scene to Militia Piece: On the Forerunners of the Haarlem Meal Still Life." Quentin Buvelot, Yvonne Bleyerveld, Milou Goverde, Zoran Kwak, Anne Lenders, Fred G. Meijer, and Charlotte Rulkens, *Slow Food: Dutch and Flemish Meal Still Lifes, 1600-1640* (Waanders Publishers, Zwolle, 2017), 51.

by Pieter Aertsen and his nephew and student Joachim Beuckelaer. Sam Segal goes as far to describes Aertsen's kitchen pieces as still-life paintings.<sup>20</sup> Works by these two artists often showcase complex compositions with elaborate depictions of foods combined with figures and landscape or cityscapes in the background. The three following examples are quite typical compositional arrangements by these artists.

In Pieter Aertsen's, *Kitchen Still-Life with a Scene of the Supper at Emmaus Beyond*, (fig. 9) the foreground is overflowing with a display of uncooked food that is presented in baskets and on red wooden trenchers. The background features a depiction of the biblical story of the supper at Emmaus with figures sitting around a table. Two knives are included in this scene. One in the foreground that lays beneath a partly cut fish. And the second in the background, lays on the table. Its handle hangs off the table, in a fashion that foreshadows the placement of knives in 17<sup>th</sup> century still-life paintings.

A similar compositional divide is found in Joachim Beuckelaer's *Kitchen Scene with Christ at Emmaus*, (fig. 10). Again, the foreground overflows with uncooked fruits and vegetables that spill out from baskets on the worktable. Whole carcasses of various fowl dangle from hooks. And stacks of unused napkins, trenchers, and ewers sit waiting to be used. In the background, figures enter through an archway, a scene that takes up a small portion of the overall composition. And there are notably no knives in this scene. In his next work, *Fish Market*, (fig. 11), a large butcher knife commands attention in the foreground. Here fresh fish are on display for the market-goers that peruse the butcher's offerings. The background does not appear to focus on a specific setting, yet a detailed cityscape is visible through the archway.

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<sup>20</sup> Segal, *A Prosperous Past*, 25.

A second type of genre scene are depictions of feasts. One such example is by the Frankfurt painter Lucas van Valckenborch. However, the objects on the table are attributed to his assistant, Georg Flegel, whom later held a career as a still-life painter.<sup>21</sup> Central to the composition in *Festive Banquet with Music* (fig. 12) is a birds-eye view of a lavishly set table complete with food and other wares. Around the table is a jovial party setting, complete with musicians who stand in the background. A minimum of five table-knives are laid out on the elaborate table setting, ready to be picked up by the diners that sit at the table.

This final painting shows a clear transition between genre paintings and the independent meal still-life.<sup>22</sup> In 2013, *Blackberries, Cherries, Pears, Melon...* (fig. 13), was attributed to Huybrecht Beuckelaer, another pupil of Aertsen and also the brother of Joachim Beuckelaer.<sup>23</sup> There is only a single figure, a woman in the background who appears to about to cook a chicken using a skewer. Central to the composition is a large, fully set table, with fruits, vegetables and bread items each placed on individual pewter plates. On the right-hand side, a table-knife rests near a partially cut melon, its handle hangs over the edge.

The paintings introduced are only a small sample of 16<sup>th</sup> century genre scenes which feature foodstuffs. However, this selection shows that knives frequently appeared in these works. The type of knife found in each painting adapts in style and form to meet the needs of a

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<sup>21</sup> Kwak, "From Kitchen Scene to Militia Piece: On the Forerunners of the Haarlem Meal Still Life" in *Slow Food: Dutch and Flemish Meal Still Lifes, 1600-1640*, 63.

<sup>22</sup> Kwak, "From Kitchen Scene to Militia Piece: On the Forerunners of the Haarlem Meal Still Life" In *Slow Food: Dutch and Flemish Meal Still Lifes, 1600-1640*, 51.

<sup>23</sup> Christie's, Paris. Sale 3579, "Le cabinet de curiosités de Jacques et Galila Hollander" October 16, 2013. Lot 69. *Attribue A Huybrecht Beuckelaer (Actif A Anvers Vers 1560-1584)*  
<https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/paintings/attribue-a-huybrecht-beuckelaer-mures-cerises-poires-5709481-details.aspx?from=salesummary&intObjectID=5709481&sid=50a65150-d792-4ab5-8517-a9987658acf0>. Accessed February 28, 2020.

particular place and time. In Pieter Aertsen's, *Kitchen Still-life...* (fig. 9), the manner in which the two different knives are depicted suggest they are present to serve a specific function. The knife in the foreground appears to be used to cut the fish on the plate. And the position of knife in the background on the table alludes that this knife is used for eating. The butcher knife in Beuckelaer, *Fish Market* (fig.11), simultaneously indicates the occupation of the man who holds this object and the location of the setting. By contrast *Festive Banquet* (fig. 12) and *Blackberries, Cherries, Pears, Melon...* (fig. 13) the table-knives are much more refined in appearance. They communicate that a civilized manner of eating would be expected at this table. In other words, the knife itself suggests various kinds of social contexts.

The idea that the inclusion of the knife in these paintings is intended to communicate something about the social context of the setting is furthered in the instances in which a knife is not present. The absence of the knives in Joachim Beuckelaer's, *Kitchen Scene...* (fig. 10), signifies a particular time of the narrative that takes place in the background. The figures have just arrived, without a cook and without utensils such as knives, food preparation cannot begin. If a knife was present in this moment, it would suggest that food preparation was in progress or that the food on display was ready to be picked up and consumed. Consideration of social context might help explain the table-knives found in the early independent still-life paintings.

The independent meal still-life appeared in the Southern and Northern Netherlands at around the same time. However, there are two works by Antwerp-based artist Hieronymus Francken the Younger credited as the first of the genre. Those pieces, *A Rich Man's Meal* (fig. 14), and *A Poor Man's Meal* (fig. 15) suggest that the independent still-life first began in the



South.<sup>24</sup> While these paintings still include small figurative and landscape elements through the window depicted in the background, the compositional strategies make them a departure from the genre scenes previously described. These works depict food and tableware close up from a birds-eye view. The items overlap one another, creating a crowded composition. The sense of an overcrowded table is multiplied by the cropping of the elements at the edge of the panels.

The setting, food and tableware all align with the social class that the title of each work alludes to. In *A Rich Man's Meal* (fig. 14), the food items are those that only someone of wealth could afford. The plates are pewter, the ewers are made from silver and on the right-hand side of the composition, partially hidden by a lemon wedge, is a silver table-knife made in a refined style. In *A Poor Man's Meal* (fig. 15), the foods are much more simplistic. The fish on the red trencher in the foreground is presented in an unpretentious way. The additional tableware matches this class standing. Instead of silver ewers, they are thick clay vessels to hold liquids. And instead of a refined table-knife, a dagger-like knife, posed in an uncouth manner, sticks out from a large piece of bread. These works by Francken are known to have been copied and were widely circulated, making this important to the development of this genre.<sup>25</sup>

The compositional strategies found in these two works continued onto the next phase in the development of the independent meal still-life. However, the work after Francken departs from depictions of the figure and landscape. These details can be seen in work by a second Antwerp-based painter thought to pioneer banquet and breakfast-pieces, Osias Beert. His

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<sup>24</sup> Fred G. Meijer, "Meal Still Lifes in the Southern and Norther Netherlands: Reciprocal Inspiration?" in *Slow Food: Dutch and Flemish Meal Still Lifes, 1600-1640* (Waanders Publishers, Zwolle, 2017), 34. See also, Segal, *A Prosperous Past*, 39-43 and Vergara, *The Art of Clara Peeters*, 24.

<sup>25</sup> Meijer, "Meal Still Lifes in the Southern and Norther Netherlands: Reciprocal Inspiration?" in *Slow Food*, 33.

piece, *Still-life with Bread, Fruit and Wine* (fig. 16) follows those compositional conventions, with a birds-eye view of foods and tableware that sits in front of a dramatic black background. A refined table-knife is still present, and as with the genre scene paintings, the end of the handle rests over the edge of the table. The design of this knife differs from those seen previously. It features an ornate handle made from small pieces of cut stone.

Many scholars have theorized that Beert trained Clara Peeters. One such reason that scholars have reached this conclusion is the similar items that the two artists featured in their work.<sup>26</sup> This similarity is visible in Peeters' *Herring, Cherries and Artichoke* (fig. 17). She too depicts a bowl full of cherries, and a remarkably similar bread roll that appears in a number of her other paintings. The ways in which this painting differs from Beert's speak to a number of innovations that Peeters is credited as contributing to the banquet and breakfast-piece genre. We are no longer viewing a full birds-eye view of the items on display. Instead, this painting features a slightly lowered perspective of the table and we see the items head-on. This painting is one instance of Peeters' oeuvre in which she depicts a table-knife without her name engraved on the side. This knife also hangs from the edge.

After Antwerp, the meal-still life began to appear in the north in Haarlem, this was the other important location in the Netherlands for the development of banquet and breakfast pieces. The work from this city has similar formal choices such as a birds-eye perspective and the overlapping of objects. In addition, many of the food and table items featured are similar. On this list of items are table-knives. Scholars have noted some distinctive differences between the artists of these cities. Van Gelder notes that works from Antwerp tend to be more crowded

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<sup>26</sup> Decoteau, *Clara Peeters*, 12.

than the work comes from Haarlem.<sup>27</sup> The artist Floris van Dijck is considered to be the first Haarlem-based painter to work in this genre. The first work by him that is known is *Still-life with Cheese and Other Foodstuffs* (fig. 18).<sup>28</sup> This painting features a similar birds-eye perspective of a table set with exquisite foods and other wares. Compared to the work by Antwerp artist, a significant difference here is that this meal appears to have already begun. The shells from nuts litter the table. An apple cut in half, and its peel rest on the pewter plate that precariously sits on the edge of the table. The table-knife is again an ornate specimen. Instead of being placed near the edge of the table, the blade rests on top of halved walnut. Despite the exquisiteness of the objects on display, the table shows a general sense of disarray. A second prominent Haarlem-based artist is Floris van Schooten. His work, *Still-life with Fruits...* (fig. 19) from 1617, shows that Northern artists continued to use a birds-eye perspective and uncrowded compositions in their work. On the right-hand side, a table-knife rests firmly on the table, its blade is partially obscured by the bowl of pears.

Although only a handful of early banquet-piece and breakfast-piece paintings have been discussed, these selected works present a typical list of the foodstuff and tableware found in this genre. This selection of paintings speaks to what the scholars discussed at the beginning of this chapter have noted; the table-knife is a commonly found item. To explain the prevalence of this object, scholars Van Gelder, Bergström and Kloek conclude that the table-knife was incorporated into these early paintings purely for formal reasons. Possibly to lead the viewer's eye into the scene, to increase the sense of depth, or, in the case of the handle hanging over

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<sup>27</sup> Gelder, *Ashmolean Museum*, 15.

<sup>28</sup> Meijer, "Meal Still Lives in the Southern and Norther Netherlands: Reciprocal Inspiration?" in *Slow Food*, 38.

the edge, for the artist to show off their technical abilities. Part of the problem of this limited scholarship and with the approach of treating all depictions of table-knives equally is that it overlooks the variation of the type of knife selected and manner in which it is posed in the scene. As seen in this small sample of paintings, the decision to choose a knife appears consistent, but the design and the placement of the knife varies in each painting. Francken's, *A Poor Man's Meal* (fig. 15), is the only instance in this group that depicts a rugged type of table-knife. The remaining paintings include a knife made of a variety of exquisite materials. And while a handle hanging over the edge was often seen, there are also instances where the knife rests entirely on the table and instances where the blade was partial obscured. The variation of knife styles and placement suggest that each of these knives were carefully considered by these artists. In other words, the knives depicted were selected with intention that goes beyond only a formal need of balancing a composition as these scholars have suggested.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, prior to the term 'still-life', paintings were named by categories such as 'breakfast-piece'. The notion of a category suggests a standardized convention that was likely influenced by cultural expectations. Meaning that it is possible, the items depicted in these paintings were selected in order to adhere to a particular convention. In the case of breakfast-pieces, artists may have considered the collection of foods and tableware would be expected by their patrons in an actual breakfast setting. We have evidence of these labels used in household inventory records.<sup>29</sup> This suggests that patrons and artists may have understood their work through a lens of these categories. There is good reason to believe that

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<sup>29</sup> Alejandro Vergara notes of a Dutch language household inventory record which that describes a painting as, 'a sugar banquet painted in 1608 by a woman Clear Pieters from Antwerp.' See Vergara, *The Art of Clara Peeters*, 13.

artists from this era would want to adhere to a set of conventions. At this time, there was a massive cultural shift in how artwork was purchased. Instead of following the previous patronage system, artwork was increasingly sold on the open market. Painters would make their work on spec, meaning, they would develop paintings in the hope of them being sold. Without documentation on Peeters, we must assume that she too was susceptible to the meeting the demands of the general art-buying public at the time. A standard convention, or thematic approach to choosing objects depicted in early still-life works is underscored when looking at examples that excluded knives.

Another type of painting was a 'sugar-banquet piece.' One such example is Osias Beert's *Dishes with Oysters...* (fig. 20). This painting adheres to the formal conventions of other banquet pieces with its birds-eye view of exquisite foodstuff and tableware. Starting clockwise from the foreground on the left side, there is a tray of oysters, a bowl of nuts and raisins, a tazza full of sugared almonds, a bowl of chestnuts and slightly in front of this bowl, inside the top of the lid, is quince jam, finally, on the right-hand side in the foreground is a bowl full of a variety of sweets.<sup>30</sup> Clara Peeters has made a similar depiction of tables full of sweets. The work *Still-life with Sweets...* (fig. 21), depicts similarly patterned porcelain bowls full of nuts, raisins, and cookies. There is an additional cut pomegranate with its seeds revealed. Notably, a knife is absent in both of these paintings. The absence of a knife in these works may be a result of the conventions which determined a sugar-banquet piece.

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<sup>30</sup> Quentin Buvelot, Yvonne Bleyerveld, Milou Goverde, Zoran Kwak, Anne Lenders, Fred G. Meijer, and Charlotte Rulkens, *Slow Food: Dutch and Flemish Meal Still Lifes, 1600-1640*. (Waanders Publishers, Zwolle, 2017), 88-9.

Given that food and tableware are the objects on display in these works, it is likely that the thematic selection of objects was heavily influenced by meal and dining customs of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century in the Netherlands. These artists likely drew from their shared cultural knowledge of food preparation and dining customs when making their selections of objects to depict. Each of the objects were considered normal to a particular type of meal. Therefore, to further understand why this knife appeared in so many paintings it is necessary to understand how table-knives were used and the customs regulating their usage. This cultural information about the knife will be discussed in Chapter 2.

## Chapter 2

### *The Table-Knife and the Wedding-Knife; Usage and Customs*

At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century in the Netherlands, the table-knife was a relatively new utensil. In the history of Western dining, fingers were the primary tool with which to eat until the middle-ages. It was at that moment the knife was added into the repertoire. However, it did not replace the previous tradition for it remained good manners to use both a knife and one's fingers at the table. A detail of a fresco (fig. 22) depicts King Christian I of Denmark enacting this custom. With his knife he slices the food on his plate into smaller portions. Once complete, he will use his fingers to bring the morsel to his mouth. As this image shows, this manner of eating was practiced by individuals of all classes, including members of the court.

Well into the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the table-knife was often the only instrument available to consume non-liquid foods.<sup>31</sup> A shared serving spoon might be used to consume soup and a serving fork might carry small portions to one's plate. Smaller table forks that are a staple of contemporary Western dining were uncommon and have a surprisingly complicated history in most European countries. While there are exceptions, most of the population viewed the fork with various negative connotations. The most prevalent was that forks were associated with Lucifer.<sup>32</sup> In the Netherlands, negative perceptions of these objects continued till at least the

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<sup>31</sup> Margaret Visser. *The Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities, and Meaning of Table Manners*. First American ed., (Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 190.

<sup>32</sup> Jochen Amme notes of a German language source which quotes a source as referring to a fork as a "devil's claw", something which had no place on a Christian table." See Jochen Amme, *Historische Bestecke: Formenwandel von Der Altsteinzeit Bis Zur Moderne = Historic Cutlery: Changes in Form from the Early Stone Age to the Mid-20th Century*. (Arnoldsche, 2003). Amme's original source is, Alain-Charles Gruber, *Kostbares Essbesteck des 16. Bix 18. Jahrhunderts*, Berne 1976, 8. Also, Charles T. P. Bailey discusses a man named Thomas Coryat of Odcombe who adopts the fork and is nicknamed 'Fucifer', a play on Lucifer, by his English comrades. See, Charles T. P. Bailey, *Knives and Forks* (London. The Medici Society, 1927), 6. In addition, for a gendered interpretation of the Western exclusion of the fork, see Carolin C. Young, "The Sexual Politics of Cutlery," in Sarah D. Coffin, *Feeding Desire: Design and the Tools of the Table 1500-2005*; [exhibition at Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, May 5 - October 29, 2006] (New York: Assouline, 2006), 102 -112.

18<sup>th</sup> century, as demonstrated by Dutch essayist and journalist Justus van Effen. In 1733 he writes that, “a scoured or well-washed fork” is unclean compared to one’s fingers.<sup>33</sup> The use of religious and moralistic messaging actively rejecting the fork, makes the public acceptance of the table-knife all the more intriguing. Furthermore, when considering that the use of one’s fingers at the table was a polite form of dining, table-knives are curious objects. This tool was not a necessity, which suggests that it offered something more than simply a mode which to fulfill the basic need of eating.

The focus of this chapter will be the social context of the table-knife and wedding-knives in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Netherlands. This chapter is divided into two parts; the first will discuss table-knife customs and the table-manners which regulated this object. The second part will present the known customs regarding wedding-knives. There is limited scholarship on wedding-knives, and as will be discussed, it is unclear if the known table-knife customs and manners apply to wedding-knives or if these objects followed a different and presently unknown set of traditions.

The table-knives that appear so frequently in 17<sup>th</sup> century still-life painting abided by a set of social customs that differed from contemporary understanding of this object. As discussed in chapter one, 17<sup>th</sup> century still-life painters may have considered meal and dining customs of their day when deciding to include table-knives in their work. Understanding how table-knife and the wedding-knife were viewed and used in the daily life can help interpret Peeters’ choice to depict her ornate silver knife.

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<sup>33</sup> *Messen vorken in Nederland, 1500-1800 = Knives and forks in the Netherlands, 1500-1800* (Gemeentemuseum, 1972), 2.



### ***The Table-Knife***

In the history of knives, those used at the table typically fell into two main types.<sup>34</sup> The first of these was the carving-knife, which sliced large portions of meat or bread to share with guests. This type of knife appears to have only be used at the court. The task of carving was reserved for the Squire Carver, who performed the act through elaborate ritual.<sup>35</sup> Knives of all kinds were costly to produce which is why this specialized knife with a single function likely did not appear outside of court tables.

The table-knife is the second type. At the court, table-knives were used to convey food to one's mouth. And for ordinary citizens, table-knives were used for both carving and conveying foods. At most, individuals might own a pair of knives. As the custom was to use one for cutting meat and the other for bread.<sup>36</sup> Cutlery sets of larger numbers were not common, even at the court. Meaning most individuals did not own enough knives to provide them for their guests. Because of this, it was necessary for individuals to carry their knives with them when traveling or eating anywhere outside of their own home. Even still, it was a common practice to share knives with others at the table. Simon Moore notes that at the court of Duke of Burgundy at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, a single knife might be shared between seven guests at that table.<sup>37</sup> If sharing knives was practiced at the court, it most likely was followed in lower-class households.

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<sup>34</sup> Charles T. P. Bailey, *Knives and Forks* (London. The Medici Society, 1927), 1.

<sup>35</sup> Messen vorken in Nederland, 1500-1800, 1.

<sup>36</sup> Messen vorken in Nederland, 1500-1800, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Simon Moore, *Cutlery for the Table: A History of British Table and Pocket Cutlery* (Sheffield: Hallamshire, 1999), 76.

Both men and women carried knives until at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>38</sup> The fashions associated with this practice changed over the centuries and varied among social classes. Generally speaking, knives were carried either attached at or suspended from a belt or girdle worn at the waist.<sup>39</sup> Upper-class men placed the pair of knives in a decorated sheath made of wood or leather. While upper-class women carried theirs in an embroidered purse that was suspended from their girdle. The knives of Netherlandish women would accompany other items hanging from their waist, such as their keys, scissors and a needle-case. Paul Zumthor describes this collection of items as a “domestic badge of honor.”<sup>40</sup> Those that could not afford exterior cases might instead use a scarp of fabric to loop their knife to their belt.

### ***At the Table***

In its earliest form, the table-knife may have been used for additional functions of daily life. Charles T. P. Bailey states that ordinary citizens would use the same knife for both carving food or cutting an enemy’s throat.<sup>41</sup> This is a possibility as one’s knife was readily accessible at the waist, although Baily did not verify his statement with documentation. However, early texts on table-manners may inadvertently corroborate his idea. For, in a review of the manners which regulate the table-knife, a clear theme of the perception of this object emerges. There is a sense that this object is dangerous and a need to constrain how this object was used at the table.

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<sup>38</sup> Klaus Marquardt, *Eight Centuries of European Knives, Forks and Spoons: An Art Collection*, (Stuttgart: Arnold, 1997), 12.

<sup>39</sup> Moore, *Cutlery for the Table*, 73, 75.

<sup>40</sup> Paul Zumthor, *Daily Life in Rembrandt’s Holland*, (Stanford University Press, 1994), 60-1.

<sup>41</sup> Bailey, *Knives and Forks*, 1.

Attempting to use these books as a source for understanding how knives were used in daily life does come with a caveat. First, given that books were not widely accessible in terms of both cost and literacy, it is safe to assume that the recorded customs might have only been read by members of the elite. Meaning, this information cannot provide insight into the daily life of lower-class persons. Second, just because manners were written down does not confirm that these ideas were followed, making it impossible to know for certain the table manners and customs actually practiced. This means that linking these customs to Peeters is an impossible feat. Therefore, to use these written sources as a key to interpret Clara Peeters' work is cautious territory. What texts on table-manners do provide, is a glimpse into the Western conception of civility.

The history of Western table-manners is best addressed in *The Civilizing Process* by Norbert Elias, who lays out direct quotes from many early texts. The first of which come from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. However, it is likely that the manners recorded in these books had originated much earlier. How one should properly use a knife at the table is a common concern of texts ranging between the 13<sup>th</sup> through the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The earliest mentions of the knife appear in two books from the middle ages. The first is Caxton's *Book of Curtesye* which states that one should never point their knife at their face.<sup>42</sup> The second book is *The Babees Book*, which states one should not use their knife to clean between their teeth.<sup>43</sup> Elias interprets these actions to derive from the horror of a knife pointing at one's face. The dangerous quality of this object is

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<sup>42</sup> Norbert Elias, Edmund Jephcott, Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom, and Stephen Mennell. *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*. Oxford (Inglaterra); Malden (Massachusetts, Estados Unidos: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 104.

<sup>43</sup>Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 75.

repeated in C. Calviac's 1560 book *Civilitéé*. He states that if one passes a knife at the table, the object should be held the it's sharp tip, so that the recipient could grab the knife by its handle.<sup>44</sup>

Perhaps the most thorough explanation of how a knife should be used at the table comes from Erasmus of Rotterdam's 1530 *De Civilitate Morum Puerilium Libellus* (*Handbook on Good Manners for Children*). The dangerous quality of this object is less of the focus in Erasmus' text, instead, it is the threat of uncivility that underlies why one needs to control how the knife is used. For example, Erasmus states that the act of playing with one's knife, which admittedly sounds dangerous, is a marker of insanity. Erasmus makes it clear that the knife is an expected object at the civilized table. He states that a table setting is only complete with a properly cleaned knife on the right-hand side of one's dish. One should always use a knife to cut one's bread. And the sharp tip of a blade is best to take salt from the salt cellar. Erasmus views one who uses their fingers for either of these tasks as being vulgar. Finally, one should be taught how to politely and appropriately carve food from a young age.<sup>45</sup> In Erasmus' text, the emphasis is that proper usage of the knife is how a person can demonstrate their level of civility.

The sharp points of table-knife blades stopped being a threat at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In France, this change came with the help of a law. In 1669, Louis XIV released a royal edict that made it illegal for anyone to carry a pointed knife and for artisans to make them. Bailey believes this change was made as a way to discourage assignations at the table.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 105.

<sup>45</sup> All the writing of Erasmus mentioned can be found in, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Translated by Eleanor Merchant. *A Handbook on Good Manners for Children. De Civilitate Morum Puerilium Libellus* (Preface Publishing. Great Britain, 2008), 44-57.

<sup>46</sup> Bailey, *Knives and Forks*, 8.

The customs and manners which regulated the table-knife suggest that these objects had the potential to display an owner's civility and status. As discussed, table-knives were not a necessity. Fingers were still an acceptable tool with which to eat. The use of a knife altered and elevated the act of eating. If manners were performed properly, it was a way to show one's level of civility. Following through with these manners and simply having the knowledge of proper usage of the knife at the table was a mark of one's status.

Status was also communicated through the ownership of these objects. Zuthmor's suggestion that these knives were part of a 'domestic badge of honor' speaks to the level of pride that owners of knives held for their objects. The materials of the knife and the method in which it was carried by their owner would communicate one's class. For one to own a knife and to use it properly would create a clear distinction between those that owned a knife and those that didn't.

In chapter one, the question of why knives were so prevalent in 17<sup>th</sup> century still-life painting was introduced. To return to this question, I believe the presence of a table-knife in these works was a way for artists to link their paintings to this concept of civility. Depicting a knife in still-life paintings, especially knives made of luxurious materials, would make the link to status. For the burgeoning middle-class, a display of status would be an appealing reason to purchase a still-life painting in this era. A table-knife acted as a mirror to Western societies sense of manner, morals, and a sign of being cultured.

However, the knife depicted in Peeters' paintings that is the focus of this paper is believed to be a wedding-knife. As stated, the research on wedding-knives is limited. It is not

clear if table-knives and wedding-knives were subject to the same customs and manners. The following section will discuss what is known about wedding-knives.

### ***Wedding-Knives***

The custom of gifting wedding-knives to brides appears to have been practiced throughout Europe and England and began during the late fourteenth century. Charles R. Beard notes a 1383 French marriage contract which stipulated the bride would receive knives. This was a popular custom in both the northern and southern Netherlands.<sup>47</sup> These knives tended to be made of silver, therefore, the custom may have been limited to the upper classes.<sup>48</sup> However, there are accounts of the middle-class also gifting these knives. In the Netherlands, the practice continued until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>49</sup> Research on wedding-knives is limited and it is highly possible that the customs concerning these knives differed by region. I have tried to limit my sources to those that speak only on practices in the Netherlands. However, there are limited English-language texts about this region. This is an area in which greater study needs to occur. As with table-manners, wedding-knives, and more broadly, wedding customs, come from archival documents on members of the upper-class. This information may or may not describe the custom of gifting wedding-knives in the middle class. All aspects of these objects are steeped in uncertainty. Included in this is how to determine

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<sup>47</sup> Alan Chong, Wouter Kloek, and Celeste Brusati. "Still-life Paintings from the Netherlands: 1550-1720." Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1999, 128-130 and Wieseman, *The Age of Rubens*, 531-2.

<sup>48</sup> Bailey, *Knives and Forks*, 4 and Claudia Goldstein, "A Fool Goes to a Wedding: The Social, Visual, and Performative Function of the Wedding Banquet in Early Modern Antwerp" *Predella. Journal of Visual Arts*, 133.

<sup>49</sup> *Messen vorken in Nederland, 1500*, 5.

what characteristics distinguish wedding-knives from other kinds of knives, when wedding-knives were given to the bride, why knives were given, and how these knives were used.

The majority of scholars share a similar definition of wedding-knives. Many describe a wedding-knife as one in which the bride's name and a year of the wedding is engraved on the side of the handle. These knives also tend to have iconographic depictions of love such as a flaming heart or biblical scenes. These knives typically came in a set of two. In the upper-classes, they were gifted within a leather case or an elaborately embroidered purse. This purse was how a woman carried the knives on her person.

Two differing definitions comes from Charles R. Beard and Claudia Goldstein. Beard broadens his definition of wedding-knife to include any pair of knives that has a love-themed poem engraved on the handle, suggesting that a bride's name is not required to constitute a wedding-knife.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Goldstein defines wedding-knives to have love-themed iconographic elements, such as an embraced couple or a decorative heart.<sup>51</sup>

Most scholars agree that these knives were gifted to the bride at the engagement celebration. At the end of the sixteenth-century in the Dutch Republic, engagement was a multi-stepped process. Before couples could wed in a church or sign a marriage contract, they were required by law to declare their future marriage three times. The first of these steps was the initial promise of marriage in front of family. Second, the couple would register their forthcoming marriage. Third in this process, was the engagement reception at which, gifts were displayed in decorated baskets for the couple's family and friends to evaluate. Included in these

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<sup>50</sup> C.R. Beard, "Wedding Knives", *The Connoisseur*, LXXXV, (February 1930), 91.

<sup>51</sup> Goldstein, "A Fool Goes to a Wedding: The Social, Visual, and Performative Function of the Wedding Banquet in Early Modern Antwerp", 137.

gifts were a set of knives, but also other objects similarly decorated with symbols of love, such as lace collars, cuffs, a fan and bridal gloves.<sup>52</sup>

Another conflicting point are accounts of knives with love themed messaging on the handle gifted to mistresses or to the wives of men who were potential business partners.<sup>53</sup> Although the definition and the practice of gifting these knives is unclear, one thing known for certain is that these gifts had a positive reception. Charles Beard states "...from the end of the fifteenth century at the latest, they came to be regarded as essential a part of the equipment of every housewife of position as her keys."<sup>54</sup> This point is highlighted by Simon Moore, who states that the recipient of knives would have "...felt socially elevated since there was an element of social snobbery in the giving of such gifts amongst the merchant classes..."<sup>55</sup>

Knowing that these knives were highly appreciated might provide insight into why gifting knives was a practiced custom. It is uncertain which of the customs regarding table-knives carried over to the gifted wedding-knives. However, the theory that the ownership and proper usage of a table-knife could display one's level of civility and status might offer an appropriate interpretation of the wedding-knife custom. As these were highly decorative and personalized knives, they would have been costly. Displaying these knives in front of family for an engagement party would have also displayed a groom's wealth. A woman carrying these knives on her person would have displayed her status.

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<sup>52</sup> Bianca M. Du Mortier. "Giving Each Other the Right Hand: Weddings in the Seventeenth Century," in Marlies Stoter, Justus. Lange, and Gieneke Arnolli. *Rembrandt & Saskia: Love and Marriage in the Dutch Golden Age* (Leeuwarden: Fries Museum, 2018), 102 - 104

<sup>53</sup> Beard, "Wedding Knives", 91

<sup>54</sup> Beard, "Wedding Knives", 91

<sup>55</sup> Moore, *Cutlery for the Table*, 113-4.



There are still a number of unknowns of how these knives were used after being gifted. It is uncertain if these knives replaced a bride's first set of knives. Also, it is not clear how and how often they were used for dining. For example, it would be helpful to know if they were reserved for special occasions, and if these knives were shared with anyone. It has been stated that women would wear these wedding-knives outside of the home.<sup>56</sup> And one might assume that if a woman carried these knives with her, that they would be used on a regular occurrence. As regular table-knives might be shared with others at the table, it is possible these objects were shared with others. However, the intimate nature of these objects may have altered their usage in a social dining setting.

These last sets of unknowns would be the most helpful to know to analyze Peeters' decision to include her silver knife in six of her paintings. There are a number of scenarios that could be deduced with this information. For instance, if wedding-knives were only used at home, this could connote a specific setting of Peeters' banquet. If the knives were only brought out for special occasions, this dictates a particular tone to her paintings. Or, if the custom of these knives limited who could use them, this could indicate different interpretation of this painting. If the knife was reserved only for a bride, a groom, or close family, that limits who could access the foodstuff on display. Conversely, if the knife could be picked up by anyone, it might suggest an invitation to partake in the banquet displayed in her paintings.

With so much unknown about wedding-knife customs, this information can only offer hypothetical interpretations of Clara Peeters' inclusion of her knife. Fortunately, Clara Peeters' depiction of her knife is very specific. Much can be learned from a close visual reading of the

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<sup>56</sup> Messen vorken in Nederland, 1500-1800, 5.

details on her knife. In addition, there are a number of extant knives that are similar to hers. A descriptive reading of her knife and a comparison of the knife she depicted to extant versions will be the focus of chapter 3.

### Chapter 3 *Clara Peeters' Knife*

As discussed in the previous chapter, 17<sup>th</sup> century table-knives, and wedding-knives held a great deal of social significance for the owner of these objects. Through gatherings at the table, these objects were important tools which allowed an individual to participate in the cultural events. These were precious objects, in which all details from the blade to the handle were carefully considered. The design of the knife is a reflection of social customs.

The ornate silver knife that Clara Peeters depicted in six of her paintings might resemble to some a contemporary butter-knife. The differences in design reflect how this object was used in the day-to-day. Proportionally, the blade itself is longer; the handle is only  $\frac{3}{4}$  length of the blade. The sharp edge of the blade does not feature a serrated edge like a common butter or steak knives of today. And finally, the blade ends in a sharp point. The length, sharpness and shape of the blade would have made this knife useful for carving meat, stabbing smaller portions to bring to one's plate, and taking a pinch of salt from the salt cellar. Just as the features of the blade are reflective of dining customs, the decoration on the handle is also a reflection of Peeters' culture.

This chapter focus on the details of Clara Peeters' knife handle. The handle design of Clara Peeters' knife has an extraordinary backstory. The first part of this chapter will look at the iconographic elements found on the handle and will consider the source of the design of the knife. The second part of this chapter will take a close look at two extant knives which are similar in design to that which Peeters has depicted. A comparison of the extant knives and Peeters' knife highlights potentially significant differences in how one should read Peeters' choice of this knife in her paintings.

### **The Handle**

While all six of Peeters' paintings depict the knife in the same position, analysis of the handle is based on a detail image of *Still-life with Cheeses...* (fig. 5). This detail image (fig. 20) comes from the Mauritshuis website.<sup>57</sup> In all six paintings, two sides of the handle are visible. Engraved on this thin side of the handle is 'CLARA PEETERS.' Three dots are also included; one comes before her first name, one comes after her last name, and the third resides in between.

The face of the handle is highly ornate and features a series of floral motifs, text, two nude figures and additional iconographic elements. Near the top of the handle is an elaborate medallion, inside of which is an oval shape that frames two hands holding, with an iconographic heart in between. There are additional tiny marks directly above the heart that may suggest flames. Scholars have repeatedly referred to this icon as a flaming heart. Sam Segal states that according to 'many sources' the clasped hands are a sign of faithfulness.<sup>58</sup>

The detail on the handle that scholarship on Peeters' knife tends to focus the most on are the two nude female figures and the text associated with each. Each figure is placed within its own register, one atop the other. They stand beneath their own arch in a contrapposto pose and have simplistic highlights on their breasts, stomach, thighs and knees. This pose, modeling

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<sup>57</sup> Based on visual analysis of all six depictions of the knife, it appears that the same exact knife is depicted in each of these paintings. Only two paintings have high enough photo resolutions to confirm the details of the knife are the same. Those are *Table with Cloth...*, (fig. 1) and *Still-life with Cheeses...*, (fig. 5). Three of the remaining four paintings are in private collections, making it difficult to access higher quality reproductions. Those are *Still-life with Tart...*, (fig. 3), *Still-life with Cheeses, Shrimp, Crayfish*, (fig. 4) and *Cheesestack*, (fig. 6). The fourth, *Still-life of Fruit...*, (fig. 2) is housed at The Ashmolean Museum. While the reproduction of this piece is of slightly higher quality, it is still not high enough to certify that the same knife is depicted in this painting. Ideally a close-up analysis of all six paintings is needed to confirm that the details of the knife are the exact same in each of these paintings.

<sup>58</sup> Sam Segal, *A Fruitful Past: A Survey of the Fruit Still Lifes of the Northern and Southern Netherlands from Breughel till Van Gogh* (Mijdrecht, Netherlands: Drukkerij Verweij, 1983), 62.

and silver coloration of the knife gives the impression that these figures are statues. The top figure holds a sword in her left hand, its blade points upwards. There is a dash towards the top edge of the sword, which gives the impression that this object is a cross. The bottom figure holds a jug in her right hand and pours its contents into a chalice held in her left hand. Her left foot is propped onto an unidentifiable object. Text is depicted beneath each of the figures. Below the top figure is "FIDES." The text beneath the bottom figure is difficult to make out. Most scholars have indicated the word depicted here is "TEMPO."

Below the word "TEMPO" and above the shoulder of the handle, is a square-shaped frame; inside is an elaborate floral motif. There is a single flower in bloom projects from a stem with four leaves that rhythmically curl outwards. In between this figure's arch, and the words "FIDES" is the second motif. This motif is difficult to make out. But it appears as face of an animal with large ears. Large wings are on both sides of this face. Directly below this element is a blockish shape, that resembles a heraldic crest. On either side of this shape are floral blooms that mimic the single bloom described in the first floral motif.

The figures on the knife handle are allegorical depictions of two of the seven virtues. The Seven Virtues are made up of the four cardinal virtues of Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude and Justice. And three theological virtues Faith, Hope and Charity. Interestingly, this handle depicts one cardinal and one theological virtue.

The personification of moral concepts can be traced back to Classical Greek era. The earliest known text to use personifications of the virtues is Prudentius', 5<sup>th</sup> century *Psychomachia*. In this text, female warriors represent the virtues and the vices and battle one another in pairs, the virtues always win the battle. Depictions of the virtues again became

popular in the middle Ages. During this time, instead of depicting virtues and vices at battle, the common method of depiction was static figures that had some kind of attribute that could distinguish the virtue or vice they represented.<sup>59</sup> Depictions of the virtues continued to be popular in Renaissance and Baroque art.<sup>60</sup>

### ***Theodore de Bry***

Scholarship on Clara Peeters agrees that the design of the handle is based on the knife designs made the Theodore de Bry family workshop. Figure 24 shows an example of a print from this workshop. Born in Liege in 1527, Theodore de Bry grew up in a family of goldsmiths. He is recorded as serving in an apprenticeship in the 1530s and 1540s, most likely with his father's business. In 1560s, de Bry appears on the goldsmith guild records of Strasbourg. That same year he married which is how he obtained residence in this city. In 1563, his son Johan Theodore was born. All of Theodore's son would participate in the family's printing workshop business. Johann in particular is credited as the maker of many of the ornamental knife designs. That same year marked a decline in the city of Strasbourg's acceptance of Calvinists. Religious tension continued to grow in the following years. This situation is likely why De Bry, a Reformist left in 1577 or 1578.

De Bry's decision to move his family to Antwerp may have been an attraction to the city's economic prosperity and the increasing tolerance for Calvinists. De Bry stayed in Antwerp

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<sup>59</sup> Jelena Trkulja. "Virtues and vices in medieval art," Grove Art Online. Published online July 9, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T2220467>. Accessed March 14, 2020.

<sup>60</sup> Helen Diane Russell and Bernadine Ann Barnes. *Eva/Ave: Woman in Renaissance and Baroque Prints*. (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1990), 205.

until 1585. Although this is a relatively short amount of time this city appears to have strongly influenced his production of ornamental prints such as those found on Peeters' knife handle.

De Bry began making prints while living in Strasbourg, yet it was in Antwerp that the artist professionalized his printmaking craft. Upon moving to Antwerp, he first became a member of the Guild of Saint Luke. He then later became a member of the Goldsmith's Guild. His choice to enroll with the artisan's guild first might be a sign of his prospective career interests. It is here in Antwerp that de Bry transitions from a goldsmith to an engraver. This career transition was not uncommon as the publishing industry may have been a more lucrative trade. Groesen states that ornamental prints were a common project with which goldsmiths made the transition.

Outside of this, it is fair to say that since Antwerp was where he fully realized his career as a printmaker. It is likely that de Bry was influenced by the other practicing paintings and printmakers of Antwerp. There was already a large prevalence of depictions of the virtues in painting and artwork in this city. It is possible that it was through this network that he was influenced to use the allegorical female-figures of the virtues in his ornamental print designs. Of course, a full study of de Bry's work as both a goldsmith and an engraver would need to occur to show any correlation between de Bry's exposure to artists within Antwerp and his ornamental print output.

The French Huguenot, Etienne Delaune, is thought to have inspired de Bry. This idea comes from the stylistic similarity between Delaune and de Bry's ornamental prints. However, no source of documentation has been found that can certify a connection. Delaune was living in Strasbourg in the 1570s, which is when de Bry was living there. It is possible that there was

crossover in this city.<sup>61</sup> These designs seem to have been reserved for wedding-knives. What can be said is that his knife handle print designs had a large impact on the visual culture of his era.

### ***Extant Knives Today***

Knives that are visually similar to that depicted in these six paintings by Peeters can still be found today. The handles of these knives include many of the same details as those just described. Examples can be found online in museum collections and on art auction website. By observing two examples, one from kinds of sources, I have noted characteristics that are not represented in Peeters' paintings. The exclusion of these details from Peeters work may or may not be meaningful. Particularly to the question of if the knife depicted in her painting is something she owned.

The first of these knives comes from the auction website Bruil and Brandsma. Illustrations of this knife are included in figures 21 – 24. The company states that the origin of this object is the Netherlands and was made in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The handle is made from silver, while the knife blade is made from iron. Furthermore, this object is listed to be based off the knife handle designs by Jan Theodore de Bry.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> There is limited English language scholarship about the early career of Theodore de Bry. My source material on the artist has come from two publications by Michiel van Groesen. See Groesen, Michiel van. 2008. The representations of the overseas world in the De Bry collection of voyages (1590-1634). Leiden: Brill, and Michiel van Groesen "De Bry and Antwerp, 1577-1585. A formative period," in Burghartz, Susanna. *Inszenierte Welten : die west- und ostindischen Reisen der Verleger de Bry, 1590-1630 = Staging new worlds : de Brys' illustrated travel reports, 1590-1630* Basel: Schwabe, 2005.

<sup>62</sup> Bruil & Brandsma. "A knife with an engraved silver handle." <https://www.bb-worksofart.com/Works-of-Art/Silver/A-knife-with-an-engraved-silver-handle2>



The close-up image in figure 22 best shows similarities between this object and that which Peeters depicted in her paintings. First is the shape which starting at the base, gradually widens in the direction of the top. The smooth lines lead into a complex medallion shape that is striking similar to Peeters. In addition, on top of the medallion is a similar finial design composed of multiple stacked disks. The design engraved on the handle is also similar to Peeters. There is a combination of stylized floral motifs, a line of text, a female figure which stands beneath an arch, and iconographic motifs. The figure on this side of the handle holds a mirror in her left hand and in her right hand, she holds a serpent. The text below reads "PRVDEN." Notably inside the medallion is a similar depiction of two holding hands. A heart is placed behind as if the hands hold the heart together.

On the side (fig. 23) of this knife handle, a name is engraved. The former owner of these knives was OVDON DE WILRE. Small dots are engraved in between each portion of her name. It is assumed that this is the name of the bride. There are two details that could not be discerned through the online images of this object. Email correspondence with Bruil and Brandsma has confirmed that the engraved name is closest to the blunt side of the knife blade. In addition, the reverse thin side of the blade is blank. Therefore, a year marking the date of marriage was not engraved on this particular knife.

As Peeters depicted her knife from the same angle in each painting, we are unable to determine what is depicted the two unseen sides of the handle. Figure 24 shows the backside of the Bruil and Brandsma knife handle. The design on this side of the handle is similar, yet the elements differ. The nude female figure holds a child on her left hip. The area of her legs has faded over time. Yet, at least one or possible two children stand behind her right leg and peak

outwards at the viewer. The text below this figure reads “CHARITY.” The central circle within the medallion has also faded, it is impossible to know motif was originally depicted here.

The second extant example of these knives is housed at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. This wedding-knife, depicted in figure 25, is one of a pair. This knife provides the opportunity to observe the design tendencies of a pair of knives. This knife originated from the Netherlands and dates to 1631. The blade is made of steel, and the handle is made from silver and have gilded detailing. The museum states that the design of the handle comes from the workshop of Johann Theodore de Bry.<sup>63</sup>

The handle of this knife also has a similar shape to Peeters’ knife. The handle widens as one move further away from the shoulder. At the top of the handle is another complex medallion shape with cut-out details in the handle. This shape however is less rounded than the first extant knife and Peeters’ knife. Atop this portion is a gilded finial that also differs in design. Notably, there is a large sphere close to the base of the finial. Atop this are two small disk and two smaller spheres.

The engraved details also differ from Peeters’ design. Within a lower register is a single nude figure that is seated with her back turned to the viewer. In the top register, a second nude figure seated, she holds a mirror in her right hand. Above her is a cherub who holds a crown to be placed on the seated figure’s head. Also, in the scene appears to be a nude male figure who holds a sword that is pointed towards the seated female figure. As with Peeters knife, there is an arch above this complicated scene. Engraved along the arch shape is the word ‘BONITAS.’

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<sup>63</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum Website. “Knife” <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O110636/knife-bry-johann-theodor/> Accessed March 7, 2020.

The placement of the iconographic hands holding in Peeters' knife has a different depiction on this knife. Here, a third nude figure is shown reclining.

As with the first extant example, the reverse side of this knife has a different design. Kristin Kennedy, the curator of metalwork at the V&A graciously corresponded in regard to one pair of wedding-knives in their collection. She kindly sent additional images and clarified certain details that were unclear on their website description. The reverse side is similarly divided into two registers. Within an oval frame in the lower register, a nude figure sits facing to the viewer. In the upper register are two figures. The one on the right holds out a bowl, perhaps offering something to the second figure on the left. The text within the arch above these figures is 'ABUNDANTIA.'

What is most interesting is the second knife of this pair. This handle features different engraved designs. Although different, there is still an emphasis on allegorical figures. On this knife, one side includes the text 'PRUDENTIA.' On the reverse side is the text 'PULCRITUDO.' Both knives include the name of the bride and a year. Presumably the year refers to year of the wedding. 'MAGDALENA WILLIARTS 1631' is engraved on the side of the handle closest to the blunt edge of the knife blade.

Comparison of these two extant knives to that which Peeters depicted highlights interesting differences. Both extant objects show that knives in the style of Theodore de Bry would include differing designs on either side of the handle. Second, both examples show that the inclusion of a year was not a standardized custom. Therefore, Peeters' exclusion of a date on her own knife might not have any significance.

Perhaps most interesting to note is the consistent orientation of the engraved name on the handle in relation to the blade. In both of these examples, the bride's name is engraved on the edge that aligned to the blunt edge of the handle. The placement of Clara Peeters name on the handle differs. Her name is engraved on the side of the handle that aligns with the sharp edge of the blade. This difference may also not have specific significance.

However, it is interesting to ponder the advantages of placement of the name on a particular side of the handle. In the two extant versions, the diner using this knife would be able to visibly see their name while in use. Similar to a wedding-ring, the other diners at the table could also visibly see this name.

In contrast, if one were to use Peeters' knife, the name would be concealed from both the user and the other diners at the table. Without a doubt, Peeters has made a particular choice of placement. It is understandable that she wishes to highlight her name for the viewer of this painting.

The designs featured on the Bruil and Brandsma and V&A knife handles are vastly different. This includes the composition of the design and the style of the engraving each handle. Both claim to have come from the designs of the workshop of Theodore de Bry. There are a number of factors involved that could support the claim that these are indeed Theodore de Bry designs.

The first requires a brief overview of the process of making knives. The process would begin with the printmaker, which in this case, would be either Theodore de Bry or his son, Jonah Theodore de Bry. It is difficult to decipher which of the de Bry family members would have made the print. The quality of handwork is similar between the two, and the scholarship

in this area is currently limited. Ornamental prints with their knife designs would be disseminated in some form, possibly in books, to goldsmiths. Once the artwork was in the hands of the goldsmith, the next steps could take as many of three separate artisans before the knife would be complete.

The hafter would create the handle, the bladesmith would create the blade; it was at that point that a hallmark would be stamped onto the blade. Hallmarks were regulated through the guilds, in part to be certain that bladesmiths used the correct mixture of metals to create their wares. Not in every case, but often times the two items would be put together by a cutler. Sheathers for the knives would often made by a different artisan. It was the cutler again who would combine the knives and sheathes and then would make these goods available to the public.<sup>64</sup>

There are many uncertainties about this production. It is not clear the proximity of these different artisans. It is also unclear, if knives were made in bulk or made to order. If made to order it also brings in the question if the purchaser of the knife had any control over what pattern was engraved on the handle. In the case of wedding knives, there isn't any record stating which of these artisans would engrave the brides name. And finally, it is uncertain how far finished goods from a cutler might travel. What is certain is that each artisan was subject to guild rules. Much is documented on the rules that bladesmiths were required to adhere to.

If indeed both extant knives are based on de Bry family workshop ornamental prints, there are a few explanations for why the handles look extremely different. First off, the

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<sup>64</sup> Claude Blair, "Introduction to the History of Cutlery" in, *Masterpieces of Cutlery and the Art of Eating: An Exhibition Organized by the Victoria and Albert Museum in Conjunction with the Worshipful Company of Cutlers of London, 11 July to 26 August 1979* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1979), xii.

difference might be explained by the hand of each engraver varying. Furthermore, it is likely that hafters did not follow purchased ornamental prints very carefully.

Another explanation could be that de Bry designs were highly popular. De Bry worked during the rise of the printing press, before copyright laws were established. It is likely that other engravers mimicked his designs. It is also possible that hafters themselves mimicked de Bry's designs, eliminating any initial engraved print. These explanations suggest that de Bry's designs, and the resulting knives were in high demand. This is an interesting theory as it places Peeters' knife into a larger social context.

## Conclusion

Of the scholarship written to date on the artist Clara Peeters, there is only limited discussion about her ornate silver knife that she depicts in three of her paintings. I have noted three common approaches in which to discuss her knife, technical virtuosity, religious influence, ownership and authenticity. These three approaches overlook the social significance of this object and do not fully consider the artistic intention of including this object. In the proceeding chapters I have attempted to fill in the holes of the present-day research.

Chapter one took a close look at the knives depicted within a small sample of genre scenes considered to be early precursors of the independent meal still-life. As well as, table-knives included in a few examples of early breakfast-piece paintings. I believe that this object serves more than to compliment the formal composition of the entire work. Rather, I believe that the knife functions to communicate location and other social contexts of the scene depicted. Its inclusion is intentional, we know this because so much thought went into the choice of knife depicted, and in the instances of where the knife was completely excluded from the scene.

Chapter two considered the history of the table-knife and the customs and manners which regulated this object. As discussed, these objects were not a necessity as it was still considered polite to eat with one's fingers. The knife therefore provided something other than a mode with which to eat. For the owner of a table-knife in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, wearing this object in public offered a symbolic marker of social status. This symbolic importance was heightened through the proper public usage of these objects. A diner that both knew and could follow the accepted table-manners of their day would display their level of civility. As stated, there are a

number of unknowns concerning the social custom of wedding-knives. Greater clarity of this information would provide much needed context to analysis of Peeters' paintings.

Chapter three took a closer look at the knife handle itself; both how it was made, the origin of the designer of the handle, and the possible meaning of the depicted virtues. There was also a comparison between the knife that Peeters depicted and extant knives thought to have been designed by Theodore de Bry. Through comparison, questions of the placement of the engraved name arose. The plentitude of extant knives suggests that these knives were quite popular and important to the visual culture of Peeters' day.

I can offer a few ideas on Clara Peeters' motivation for incorporating her ornate silver knife. Firstly, I believe that the Peeters included this knife to act an invitation to the viewer. As these early still-lives are cropped, the table-knife signals location and intention. With the aid of a table-knife, the foods depicted are ready to be consumed, suggesting a dining table, oppose to a worktable found in a kitchen. And the intention is an invitation. The table-knife is inviting the viewer to pick up this object to cut off small portions of the foods on display.

Second, I believe that Peeters was taping into a practice that her peer used in their work in a way to leave her personal branding mark on her paintings. As discussed in chapter one, Sam Segal notices the frequency which early still life artists include monograms or other identifying markings on the blade of the knife depicted in their work. I feel like all that can be "known" is that Peeters was using a method of signing her painting that her male peers used. Without any proper wedding certificate, I prefer the thought that she, as an artist, was using a symbolic image that was exclusive to women (her name included on the side of a knife handle)



and turned it into her own artistic gesture. Inclusion of this item was just one more way that she stands out as an artist.

Interesting to consider the buyer of this work – why might someone else’s wedding knife appeal to them? I think this question would help understand Peeters’ intention. By including this knife in her work, the artist was tapping into something about the social context of the time. I believe this is safe to assume no matter the circumstances of her making the work. The tendency at this time was for artists to make work for sale on the open market. Perhaps, this knife’s inclusion was not fully about the artist herself. Maybe she was tapping into a shared cultural sentiment about these knives.

## Illustrations

### *Introduction*



Figure 1 Clara Peeters, *Table with Cloth, Salt Cellar, Gilt Standing Cup, Pie, Jug, Porcelain Plate with Olives and Cooked Fowl*. c. 1611, Prado Museo.



Figure 2 Clara Peeters, *Still-life of Fruit and Flowers*, c. 1612 -13. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum.



Figure 3 Clara Peeters, *Still-life with Tart, Silver Tazza with Sweets, Porcelain, Shells and Oysters*, c. 1612 -13. Russia, private collection.



Figure 4 Clara Peeters, *Still-life with Cheeses, Shrimp and Crayfish*, c. 1612-21. Private collection Antwerp.



Figure 5 Clara Peeters, *Still-life with Cheeses, Almonds, and Pretzels*. c. 1612 -15. The Hague.



Figure 6 Clara Peeters, *Cheesestack*. According to Pamela Decoteau this work was made in the 1630s. Location unknown.



Figure 7 Details of *Table with Cloth, Salt Cellar, Gilt Standing Cup, Pie, Jug, Porcelain Plate with Olives and Cooked Fowl*. c. 1611 Prado, *Still-life of Fruit and Flowers*. c. 1612 -13. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, and *Still-life with Tart, Silver Tazza with Sweets, Porcelain, Shells and Oysters*. c. 1612 -13. Russia, private collection.

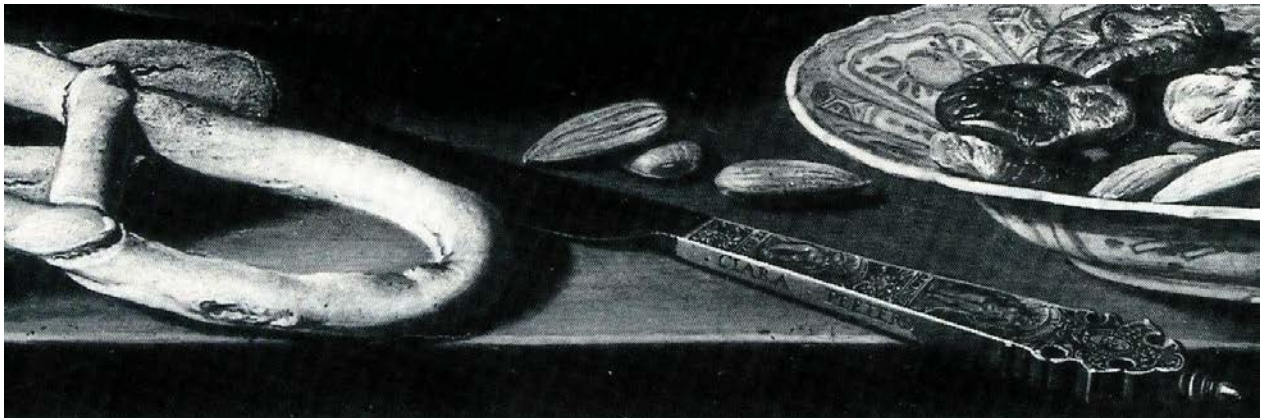


Figure 8 Details of *Still-life with Cheeses, Shrimp and Crayfish*, c. 1612-21, private collection Antwerp; *Still-life with Cheeses, Almonds, and Pretzels*, c. 1612-15, The Hague, and *Cheesestack*. According to Pamela Decoteau this work was made in the 1630s. Location unknown.

Chapter 1 - *The Table-Knife in Still-Life Painting of the Low Countries*



Figure 9 Pieter Aertsen. *Kitchen Still-life with a Scene of the Supper at Emmaus Beyond*. 1551-1553. Oil on wood panel, 25 3/4 x 36 inches.



Figure 10 Joachim Beuckelaer. *Kitchen Scene with Christ at Emmaus*. c. 1560 – 1565. Mauritshuis, The Hague





Figure 11 Joachim Beuckelaer. *Fish Market*. 1568. Oil on Baltic oak. 50 5/8 x 68 7/8 inches. Metropolitan Museum of Art



Figure 12 Lucas van Valckenborch (still-life attributed to Georg Flegel), *Festive Banquet with Music*, c. 1590. Canvas, 120 x 190 cm. Austria, private collection.



Figure 13 Attributed to Huybrecht Beuckelaer (active in Antwerp circa 1560-1584). *Blackberries, Cherries, Pears, Melon and Other Fruits, Parsnips, Bread, Cheeses and a Waffle, Roemer, Tazza and Salt Shaker on a Table-cloth*. c. 1590 - 1600. Panel, 81.5 x136.5 cm. Sale Paris (Christie's), October 16, 2013, no. 69



Figure 14 Hieronymus Francken the Younger, *A Rich Man's Meal*, 1601. Panel, 34.5 x 44 cm. Private Collection



Figure 15 Attributed to Hieronymus Francken the Younger, *A Poor Man's Meal*, c. 1600 - 1605. Panel, 37 x 48 cm. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beunigen (2288).



Figure 16 Osias Beert, *Still-life with Bread, Fruit and Wine*, in or after 1608. Copper, 49.5 x 65 cm. Berlin, Staatliche Museum zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (60.2)



Figure 17 Clara Peeters, *Herring, Cherries and Artichoke*. 1612. London, Richard Green Gallery.



Figure 18 Floris van Dijck, *Still-life with Cheese and Other Foodstuffs*, 1610. Panel, 74 x 113 cm. Private Collection



Figure 19 Floris van Schooten, *Still-life with Fruits, Bread, Butter and Ornate Chalices*, 1617. Canvas, 80 x 103 cm. Private Collection.



Figure 20 Osias Beert, *Dishes with Oysters, Fruit, and Wine*, c. 1620 / 1625. Oil on panel, 52.9 x73.4 cm National Gallery of Art



Figure 21 Clara Peeters, *Still-life with Sweets, Pomegranate, Gilt Goblet and Porcelain*, 1612. Oil on oak panel, 45.5 x 33 cm. Private Collection.

Chapter 2 – *The Table-Knife and the Wedding-Knife; Usage and Customs*



Figure 22 Detail of a fresco depicting King Christian I of Denmark using a table-knife and three fingers to eat. 1474.



### Chapter 3 – Clara Peeters' Knife



Figure 23 Detail of knife-handle depicted in *Still-life with Cheeses, Almonds, and Pretzels*. c. 1612 -15. The Hague. (fig. 5)  
Reproduction is turned sideways to better show the motifs on the top of the handle.



Figure 24 "Design for a Knife Handle with Personifications of Prudence and Temperance 1580–1600." Attributed to Johann Theodor de Bry, Netherlandish.  
<https://images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/dp/original/DP837180.jpg>



*Figure 25 Knife, full view.*



Figure 26 Knife handle side one



*Figure 27 Edge of knife handle, showing engraving of the bride's name*



Figure 28 Knife handle, side two



Figure 29 Netherlandish wedding-knife dated 1631. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

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