

Everardus Bogardus 1607–1647:
The Life and Times of a Dutch Orphan

A series of thirty-three watercolors by

Jan Roelof van den Brink



Everardus Bogardus 1607–1647: The Life and Times of a Dutch Orphan

Jan Roelof van den Brink

In the winter of 1995–96, Jan Roelof van den Brink painted this series of thirty-three watercolors based on the historical study, *The Ways of Evert Willemsz: A Dutch Orphan in Search of Himself (1607–1647)*, by the cultural historian Willem Frijhoff, professor at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam.

ABN AMRO Bank is pleased to make this exhibition possible on the occasion of the listing of its shares on the New York Stock Exchange.



ABN·AMRO Bank

Cover:

1 *The orphans, May 23rd 1996*,
watercolor and oil pastel.

Adapted from H. van Ommen,
(1620).

Everardus Bogardus 1607–1647:
The Life and Times of a Dutch Orphan

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Introduction

History is a wise teacher for those who are willing to heed its lessons.

ABN AMRO Bank, which traces its roots to the foundation of the Netherlands Trading Society in 1824, nurtures its history and looks upon it as the basis for the present and the future. In the words of British playwright Sir Arthur Wing Penuel (1855-1934), “I believe the future is only the past again, entered through another gate.”

Penuel’s words might well have been written for ABN AMRO Bank, which is the product of a long series of mergers and acquisitions. It is because we have always kept our eyes on the future that we are what we are today: a solid, multi-faceted and prominent network bank that ranks among the world’s leading financial institutions.

Not only history, but also art, plays a considerable part in the daily life of ABN AMRO Bank. Over the years, the bank’s art foundation has built up a collection of contemporary art by artists who are Dutch or live in the Netherlands. These works are neither acquired for investment purposes nor sold. They are intended for the enjoyment of the personnel and clients and hang or stand in the bank’s many offices around the world. In the past, the emphasis has been on graphics, but in recent years it has shifted to painting, sculpture and drawing.

This collection which I am pleased to introduce combines history with art. Dr. Jan Roelof van den Brink, who was chairman of the former AMRO Bank, has, over the years, sought to express a broad range of his impressions through watercolors. The collection currently being exhibited was inspired by the history of New Amsterdam, better known these days as New York City.

Dr. van den Brink's in-depth understanding of the United States was established long before this series of watercolors was brought to life. As the Dutch Minister of Economic Affairs during the Post War reconstruction years, Dr. van den Brink was closely involved with the realization of the Marshall Plan and the European integration that followed. As chairman of the bank, he personally contributed to the development of the European American Bank, which, at that time, was a joint venture which included a number of European banks. These days, the European American Bank is a wholly-owned subsidiary of ABN AMRO Bank.

We consider it appropriate to exhibit these watercolors in New York on the occasion of ABN AMRO's listing on the New York Stock Exchange. It allows us to emphasize our commitment to the tradition in which we are rooted at this important milestone in the bank's history.

Jan Kalff

Chairman of the Board of Managing Directors
ABN AMRO Bank



The artist, Jan Roelof van den Brink, in front of his painting
The Taxis of New York, (1992).

A Long, Severe Winter

The winter of 1995-96 was a long and severe one. An eighty-year-old man has limited possibilities in such circumstances, and there is plenty of time to read. At the start of the winter, my wife, who is well aware of my keen interest in the early history of New York and was eager to keep me occupied, presented me with a newly-published study by the cultural historian and theologian Willem Frijhoff entitled *The Ways of Evert Willemsz: A Dutch Orphan in Search of Himself (1607–1647)*.

At first, I didn't know what to make of this story of the orphan. But as I read further, I was increasingly gripped by it, until I felt myself swept along in the narrative as if I were Evert Willemsz himself.

Thus, for a few weeks of that long winter, I didn't live at the end of the 20th century— but in the first half of the 17th— until I, together with Everardus Bogardus (the name that Evert Willemsz later adopted), was shipwrecked as a passenger on the *Princess Amelia*, a ship of the Dutch West Indies Company.

Bogardus had been traveling from New Amsterdam, where he was a pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church, to Amsterdam, with the director of the Dutch West Indies Company, the Governor of the New Netherlands, Willem Kieft, who was Peter Stuyvesant's predecessor.

Both passengers— the priest and the Governor— drowned off the coast of Wales. It was a dramatic and tragic ending to the lives of these two very different men who had been arch enemies for years: Bogardus, the 17th-century pastor driven by complex motives and high ideals, builder of the first church in New Amsterdam, and his adversary Kieft, a strict, sometimes cruel administrator, an Amsterdam merchant's son for whom trade was the measure of all things.

This was all extremely interesting, very graphic and typically Dutch. Early 17th-century Dutch society was marked by rapid economic expansion, risk-taking, success— and later— the inevitable ups and downs

of a fast-growing society. It was a society of mariners, mercenaries, merchants, tradesmen, farmers, priests and princes, all held together by the only “true and godly” Reformed faith.

But two other factors also united them: their common enemies— Spain and Portugal— and the temptations of the convivial, lively and notorious “inns” of New Amsterdam. According to Frijhoff, New Amsterdam, with its few hundred inhabitants, boasted no less than 18 of these establishments in Bogardus’ time. It was at these inns that people from all walks of life raised more glasses than was good for them, as they also did in the ships’ cabins where, during voyages often lasting months, there was no lack of either time or drink.

The Watercolors

So it was that Willem Frijhoff’s fascinating study inspired me to paint this series of 33 watercolors, virtually all of which are approximately 45 x 59 cm in size. Many are pure watercolors, while a number were executed with a mixed technique which also includes ink and oil pastels to increase their expressiveness.

Historical painting formed the core of European painting until well into the 19th century. Today, historical painting as a philosophy of art has been totally forgotten for almost a century, and rightly so, in my view. A work of art is not important for what it depicts, but for how it affects both the maker and the viewer. In this respect, it has much in common with music.

Anyone tending to view this watercolor series as late 20th-century historical painting should realize that it is not meant to be a narrative in pictures, nor a precise recreation of historical figures, facts and events. Rather, I regard it as a “cinematic” attempt in 33 episodes to capture the character of Everardus Bogardus’ time, and to communicate this to the viewer.

For the Dutch, the early part of the 17th century was marked by dynamism, a spirit of enterprise and aggressiveness and a desire for adventure— balanced by the certainty of a fixed system of standards and values. But above all, there was an enormous vitality which often slid into a sort of recklessness and excess.

Because the paintings are meant to reflect the mood of the times, I used fairly vivid colors, but in a limited range of color fields. They are dynamic, sometimes even aggressive — but also peaceful, searching for balance, harmony, security and companionship. Some are reflections of 17th-century artists in today's pictorial language— most are pure fantasy.

Like all my work of later years, these paintings tend toward abstraction without fully abandoning the link to visible reality. They always remain what the French call “lisible” (readable). This enables the life and times of the orphan from Woerden to be followed in the works— even if only vaguely, and sometimes, as just an echo.

Jan Roelof van den Brink
Amsterdam, April 7, 1997

The Exciting Vision of Jan Roelof van den Brink

Excerpts from an article in
Het Financieele Dagblad,
May 1990

With vigorous and moving brushstrokes, the painter Jan Roelof van den Brink marshals the colors of perceived reality within the framework of paper or canvas to charge his work with an ecstatic sense of harmony.

The artistry of an economist with a social conscience like Jan Roelof van den Brink invests each work with a dimension that goes beyond an optimized vision of the subject. These creative expressions simultaneously betray the leader's sense of purpose, seeking to further his cause with the purest altruism possible.

The Netherlands was lucky to have such an accomplished artist as one of its leaders at a time when the first stirrings of growing material wealth were starting to propel our economy towards the consumer society. As Minister of Economic Affairs, Jan Roelof van den Brink was able to draw on the human empathy underlying all art to strike an ethical and equitable balance between rapidly growing profits and hotly debated public expenditures, thus ensuring that the new-found wealth was fairly distributed among as many people as possible.

Subsequently, as the legendary chairman of the AMRO Bank, the hard evidence of success on his economic palette prompted him to give expression to his artistic creativity within the walls of the bank's buildings by setting up an art collection which is currently as meaningful as it is valuable.

In his own words: "I always found economic activity an exciting creative challenge. But it invariably involved cooperation with a lot of people. If anything went wrong, so many people were at fault. Painting is something you do on your own and if you make a mess of it, you only have yourself to blame. That's what I've always found fascinating about painting."

Drawing and painting was an early passion for this talented son of a landed family from Laren. At grammar school his art and economics teachers vied equally for his interest. But after school he had to choose between the two. In the meantime, he had made friends with a number of the many painters based in Laren, including Willem van Nieuwenhoven and Jan Smit who initiated him into the

secrets of the art of painting. Cézanne was his hero. But his commonsense father, a carpet manufacturer, advised him to learn a profession so that he could earn an honest living.

Even as a renowned economist he continued to paint. Every evening after ten o'clock he snatched an hour from his wife and children to paint a quick watercolor. Painting gave him an outlet for the trials and strains of his busy job. But the margins of his ministerial papers were also richly adorned with sketches of his colleagues caught in the fire of parliamentary debate.

Memorable scenes witnessed on his frequent business travels, such as a panoramic view from George Washington's house or a landscape in North Africa, were later brought to artistic fruition at home.

“With me, painting always starts as an exhilarating feast for the eyes. I am not a somber painter. It's a dialog with reality. The experience of perception leads to a work of art, a reality that did not exist before.”

When Jan Roelof van den Brink was able to step down from the bank in 1978 at the age of 62, he started to paint in earnest. At the end of the Sixties he had become friends with Kees Verwey from Haarlem and both the oil paintings and large watercolors testify in increasing measure to the pleasure of contemplation and creation that was forging an ever-closer bond between the two men. They virtually created a school of their own, where erudition generated a transcendent perception of reality capable of momentarily releasing the viewer from the humdrum concerns of daily life. What we see here is not mere skill or mastery, but a profound statement of wisdom based on a rich experience of life.

If the tough environment of business, banking and politics still leaves sufficient breathing space for fostering a life-rejuvenating sense of harmony and beauty, then there is hope for the future. In this sense, the work of Jan Roelof van den Brink is an example of fruitful interaction between leadership and creativity.



- 1 *The orphans*, May 23rd 1996, watercolor and oil pastel. Adapted from H. van Ommen, (1620).

Everardus Bogardus (1607–1647) was born as Evert Willemsz in Woerden. We know little more about the first years of his life, and virtually nothing about his parents. We do know, however, that he must also have been called Evert Bogaert and was admitted as an orphan to the new orphanage in Woerden, the house for the maintenance of poor orphans.

2 *'Mama' and a sick orphan, July 9th 1996*, watercolor and oil pastel. Adapted from Gabriël Metsu, (1629-1667).

In the large orphanage on the Haverstraat in Woerden, Evert Willemsz received an education and was taught the Reformed faith. This was under the supervision of a strict housefather and a housemother, or matron, whom he almost regarded as his real mother.



3 *Orphan children at play, June 2nd 1996*, watercolor, oil pastel and pastel.

A boy like Evert Willemsz had a healthy appetite and a lot of friends. They were taught to fear the Lord, and were happy and playful. But Evert Willemsz was different from the others. A tear sometimes appeared in his eye although he had suffered no injury. When he read aloud from the Bible— of which he knew whole sections by heart— he was so affected by the events in the Book of Books that you could almost hear his friends listening.



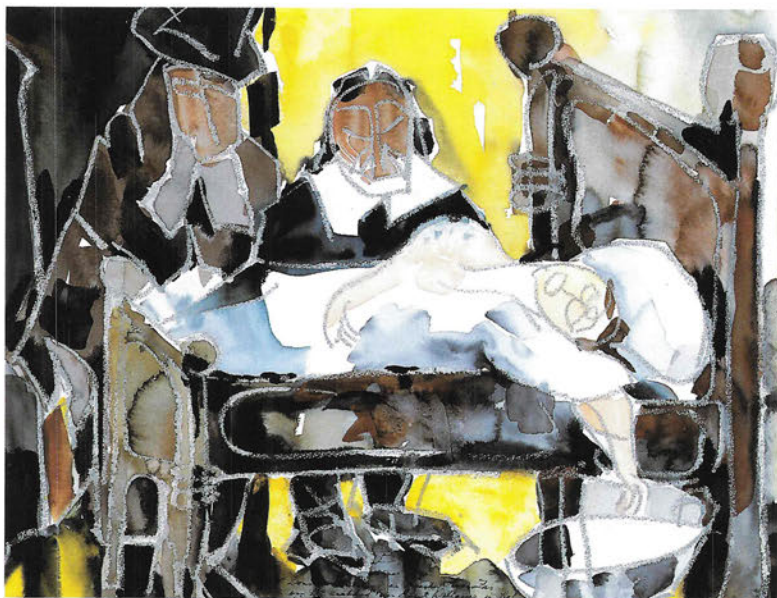
- 4 *Evert Willemsz as a tailor's apprentice, June 2nd 1996*, watercolor and pastel crayon. Adapted from Quirijn Gerritsz van Brekelenkam (ca. 1620–1668).

Like virtually all boys of his time, Evert Willemsz was apprenticed to a craftsman around the age of twelve. In the house of the tailor, the Bible had pride of place alongside the scissors.



- 5 *Pastor Alutarius and Master Lucas Zasius at the sickbed of Evert Willemsz in the Woerden Orphanage, May 28th 1996*, watercolor and oil pastel.

In Evert Willemsz' fifteenth year some strange events took place giving his life a whole new direction. He fell seriously ill, and as a result was unable to move his limbs, hardly retained his senses, lost his sight and became deaf. He was also unable to speak.



6 *The orphan Evert Willemsz and the Angel, February 4th 1996, watercolor.*



On January 18th 1623, Evert Willemsz has a mystical experience. He sees a sea of divine light. He hears voices and sees an angel. He is ‘called,’ a calling which will remain with him until his death. On January 21st, the boy is fully recovered. In the meantime, he has written down a number of ‘messages’ which are publicized verbatim by Principal Zasius of the Latin School in Woerden, in the city of Utrecht on January 23rd.

7 *The Latin School of Principal Zasius, June 4th 1996, watercolor and oil pastel. Adapted from a woodcut by Pieter Serwouters, (1586–1657), printer’s mark by Adriaan Roman, (1611–1649).*



Evert Willemsz’ calling was obviously taken seriously by his community. The young tailor was allowed to attend the Latin School.

8 *Evert Willemsz, a student at Leiden, June 10th 1996, watercolor.*

After completing the Latin School, he received a scholarship from the Woerden town council to study theology at the university in Leiden.



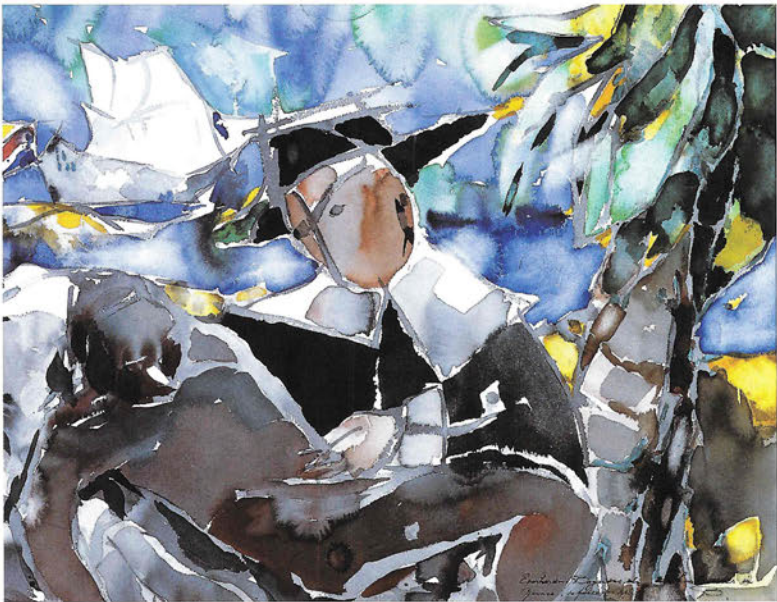
9 *Evert Willemsz appears before the church council of Leiden, June 11th 1996, watercolor.*

In the summer of 1630, at age 23, Evert Willemsz broke off his studies in Leiden. He no longer wished just to be a bookworm. On October 14th 1630 he received his certificate of Membership of the Dutch Reformed Church from the Leiden church council and left on a ship of the Dutch West Indies Company for Guinea in equatorial Africa.



- 10 *Everardus Bogardus as comforter of the sick in Guinea, February 10th 1996, watercolor.*

A comforter of the sick was what the word says: someone who provided moral and spiritual support to sick people. In addition he is a sort of medical development worker. But the comforter of the sick was more than that. He also fulfilled an important intermediary ecclesiastical function. He was a pastor who was allowed to perform virtually all the priestly tasks apart from conducting the most important parts of the liturgy, such as celebrating Holy Communion. In 1630, Evert Willemsz was thus a ‘medical development worker’ and ‘social worker’ of the early 17th century.



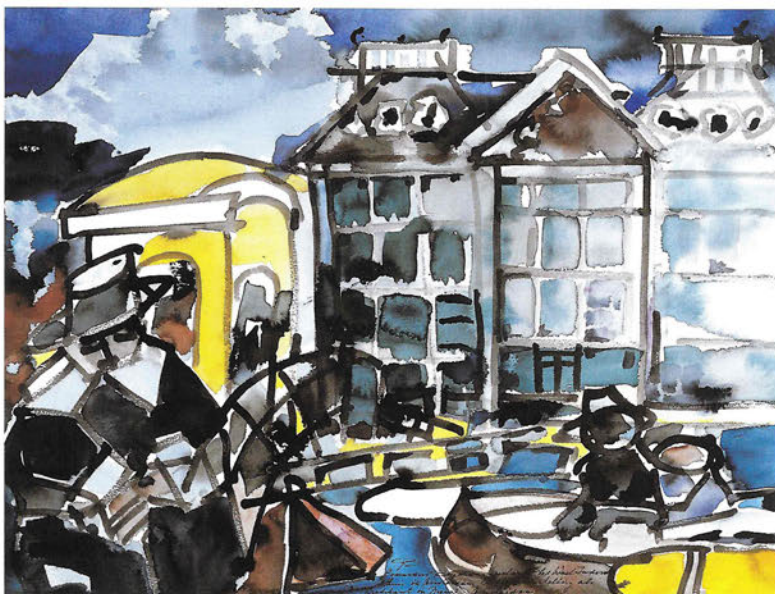
- 11 *On June 7th 1632, Evert Willemsz appears before the classis of Amsterdam, June 22nd, 1996, watercolor.*

After a stay of two years in Guinea, Evert Willemsz returned to the motherland as a mature man and reported back to the classis in Amsterdam. He requested that his masters grant him a ‘peremptory’ examination. In other words, he wished to be admitted to the ministry and to find a position as pastor as soon as possible.



- 12 *Everardus Bogardus leaves the West Indies House in Amsterdam having been appointed as pastor in New Amsterdam, June 25th 1996, watercolor.*

The directors of the West Indies Company, the Nineteen Masters, had already requested him to voyage to the New Netherlands. In a decree of July 15th 1632, Everardus Bogardus was sent by the classis and the church council of Amsterdam as pastor to New Amsterdam (now New York). For several years this had been the key post of the West Indies Company in the New Netherlands.



- 13 *The West Indies House in Amsterdam, June 25th 1996, watercolor.*

The West Indies Company was established just two months after the end of the Twelve Years' Truce. Right from the start its activities were closely linked to the renewed state of war between the Dutch Republic and Spain. Privateering of Spanish and Portuguese ships formed an important source of income for the new enterprise. These were strange and confusing times in the young Republic during the first half of the 'Golden Age.' Everardus Bogardus put himself at the service of God and the church, through the mediation of the Company.



14 *A summer day in New Amsterdam, May 20th 1996, watercolor.*

In mid-August 1632 the *Soutbergh* left the roadstead of Texel for New Amsterdam. The newly appointed pastor of New Amsterdam was also among the cabin passengers. The first impression received by a visitor to New Amsterdam, the forerunner to New York, in 1633 was far from overwhelming. The buildings consisted ‘mainly of wood, bark and turf.’ In the background of this humble scene a visitor would have seen the massive fort. This was a structure which was intended to deter anyone with any unfriendly intentions whatsoever.



15 *Everardus Bogardus in a dispute with Willem Kieft, director of the West Indies Company in New Amsterdam, March 3rd 1996, watercolor.*

Everardus Bogardus conducted his ministry in New Amsterdam for fourteen years. All this time the relationship between the pastor and the director of the company was delicate, and sometimes simply bad. The relationship was marked by the built-in tension of the strongly divergent responsibilities and characters of two men who met almost daily in a small and cramped community. After 1640, the tension increased significantly because the director liked to keep a firm hold on the reins himself, and Bogardus was no marionette even at the age of 15.



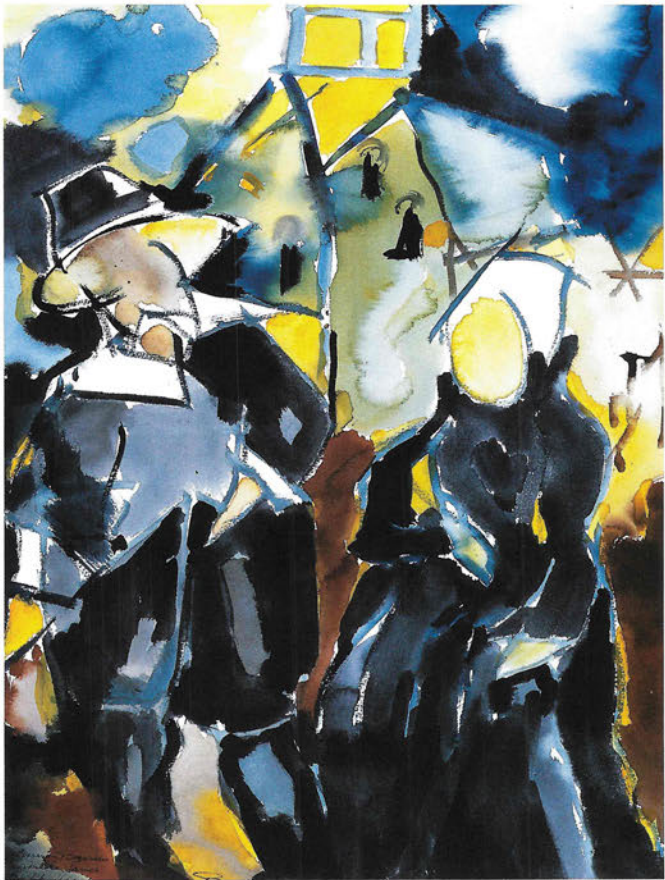
16 *The weak point of Everardus Bogardus, March 5th 1996, watercolor.*

Early 17th-century society was bonded together by the only true and godly Reformed faith, by the common enemy and, not to be forgotten, by the convivial, lively and notorious inns. And New Amsterdam, with its few hundred inhabitants, boasted no less than 18 of these establishments. In these inns people from all walks of life raised more glasses than was good for them, as they also did in the ships' cabins where, during voyages often lasting months, there was no lack of time or drink.



17 *Everardus Bogardus and Anneke Jansdr, February 20th 1996, watercolor.*

When the 26-year-old pastor stepped onto the quay of New Amsterdam in 1633 he was unmarried. At the age of 31 the pastor married Anneke Jansdr, a 33-year-old widow and the mother of five children. Women were obviously scarce in the New Netherlands. Nothing indicates, however, that this priest's marriage, which brought the birth of four children, was a disappointment for the married couple.



- 18 *The household of Everardus Bogardus in 1647, June 12th 1996, watercolor.*

In 1647, as the priest prepared to make an urgent journey to Amsterdam, he had a family of nine children to support. Nevertheless, the former comforter of the sick did not neglect his priestly duties. Despite his priestly office he was now an active participant in the development and cultivation of Manhattan and Long Island. The only thing to be said in mitigation is that the West Indies Company was a poor paymaster at that time. For years Bogardus only received half his salary paid out in New Amsterdam.



- 19 *Pastor Everardus Bogardus in New Amsterdam, amid Indians and Negroes, February 12th 1996, watercolor.*

The pastor got on very well with the indians and the Negro slaves. Bogardus was of the opinion that the directors' high-handed and often cruel policy allowed too little for the individual character, culture, different customs, as well as the interests of the native population. The Dutch certainly did not consider themselves an ethnic minority of the New Netherlands.



- 20 *Everardus Bogardus as the pastor of the New Amsterdam parish, May 29th 1996, watercolor.*

Could a man like Bogardus, I constantly ask myself, have always resisted the temptation to speak too directly and too emphatically on practical administrative problems— in a society where the modern division of church and state, which we take so much for granted, did not exist? The director and the pastor both considered themselves competent in both areas. With the pastor speaking from the pulpit, clothed in his robes of office and with— if things were in harmony, which was not always the case— the director and his officials among the congregation.



- 21 *Share in the harvest of 'Priest's Farm,' May 15th 1996, watercolor.*

In 1638, at the moment she walked up the aisle, Anneke Jansdr not only had five children but also owned a farm. She brought this agricultural property on Manhattan into the marriage as dowry. It was more than 25 hectares in size and must have been close to the current Broadway. The homestead represented a welcome addition to the priest's income. The rent collected by Bogardus in kind amounted to one-third of the harvest, 50 pounds of butter and the upkeep of a mare.



22 *The winter of 1642 in New Amsterdam, July 1st 1996, watercolor.*

Around 1640 the pastor was finding he lacked time to carry out all his tasks, not just due to the rapid expansion of his priestly duties, but also due to the many worries of his growing family and the development work. Nevertheless, the former comforter of the sick did not neglect his priestly duties. One of his deeds was to organize the construction of a new, much bigger and more attractive church with a parsonage, a project which was completed in 1642. The busy summer of that year was followed by an abnormally cold winter. During this severe winter the sea and river in New Amsterdam were frozen over. No ship could enter or leave the harbor.



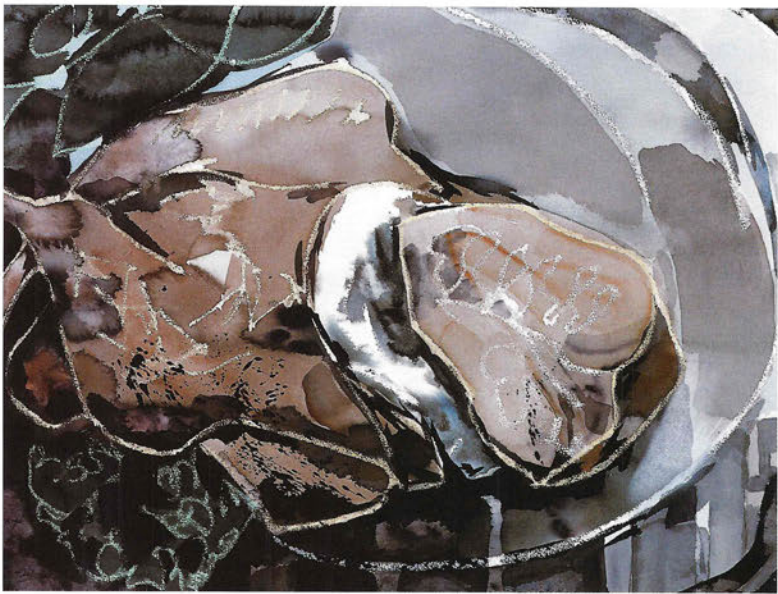
23 *Everardus Bogardus visiting parishioners on Manhattan, May 10th 1996, watercolor.*

Bogardus' horse was stabled on the farm and was only to be ridden by the priest. On his horse the pastor visited the members of his congregation on Manhattan who lived further afield, and those who pursued their business elsewhere in the New Netherlands. From 1640 onward he supplemented his signature with *Ecclesiastes Manhatenis*, priest of Manhattan.



24 *A game dish at Priest's Corner, July 10th 1996, watercolor and oil pastel.*

Shortly after his marriage, the company presented Everardus Bogardus with a piece of land on Long Island. The gift was compensation for the free board which Bogardus had enjoyed in the fort during his bachelor days. He rented his new property to an Englishman whom he also lent a rifle and a dog and supplied with gunpowder, so that the priest's wife could cook a tasty game dish now and again.



25 *Everardus Bogardus visiting the tobacco plantation at Priest's Corner, June 21st 1996, watercolor and oil pastel.*

Everardus Bogardus, the 17th-century pastor, was also a land developer. He was an active participant in the development and cultivation of Manhattan and Long Island, with faith in the future of the virginal trading crop which tobacco still represented for the Dutch.



26 *The Indian War in the New Netherlands, June 17th 1996, watercolor.*

The Indian War of 1643–1645 was a bloody conflict, which sometimes led to real slaughter and took a heavy toll of victims in the small community, but above all among the Indians. As far as the whites were concerned, it was the colonists who lived and worked far from the fort who suffered most. Willem Kieft mostly had himself to blame for the war. This at least was the firm conviction of the pastor, who had good contacts with the Indians and the Negro slaves.



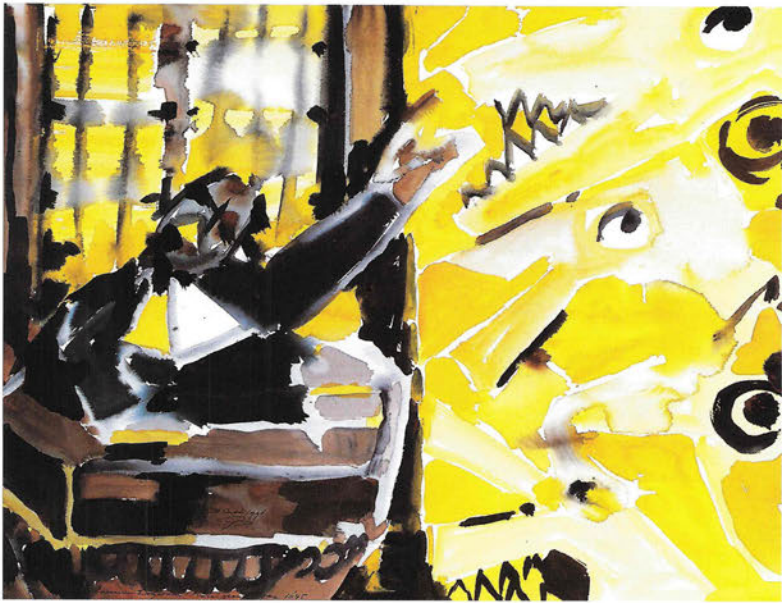
27 *Discussing a sermon in one of the inns of New Amsterdam, May 10th 1996, watercolor.*

The Indian War led to a deepening rift and increasing dissent in the small community which came together on Sundays to hear the Word of God. Preparing the Sunday sermon must have been an increasingly tricky task for the priest. And the subsequent discussions held in the hostel and the inns of New Amsterdam by the congregation were not always peaceful.



- 28 *Everardus Bogardus' Christmas sermon of 1645, May 12th 1996, watercolor.*

The sad conclusion of the New Netherlands drama was preceded by a total rift between the director and the pastor during Bogardus' last two years in New Amsterdam (1645-1647). In a memorable sermon the pastor gave full rein to the feelings he had bottled up for years and drew on cherished memories from his time in Africa. He recalled the wonderful fauna which he had seen on the Gold Coast and the 'monsters' such as the 'dragon' and the 'languado,' strange freaks which he believed could only be created under the influence of the tropical heat by cross-breeding of 'normal' types of animals: Kieft and his men were monsters and freaks. The pastor had said it magnificently!



- 29 *The Nineteen Masters meet in the West Indies House in Amsterdam to discuss the troubles in the New Netherlands, June 16th 1996, watercolor.*

In August of 1645, peace was concluded with the Indians in a New Netherlands which was close to collapse. During the Indian War, representatives of the colonists had sent several requests to the motherland, addressed to the Nineteen Masters in Amsterdam and to the States General in The Hague. The worthy lords failed to produce much of a response, however.



- 30 *Everardus Bogardus and Willem Kieft leave New Amsterdam on August 16th 1647, July 1st 1996, watercolor.*

After Stuyvesant had arrived in May 1647, the dismissed director Kieft was ordered back to the Netherlands. Bogardus departed, too, to defend himself before the competent authorities and to prove his case. He started the journey with a light heart: maybe he hadn't always chosen the ideal words, but he had said what needed to be said. He was deeply convinced that he had done his duty, both to God and to his fellow men.



- 31 *Everardus Bogardus drowns off the coast of Wales, close to Swansea, July 2nd 1996, watercolor.*

The two battle-weary men, Kieft and Bogardus, began their last journey on August 16th 1647. They traveled as cabin passengers on the *Princess Amelia*, an armed home-bound ship of the Dutch West Indies Company with a substantial cargo of dried fish and beaver furs on board. A little more than three kilometers off the coast of Wales, fate struck. On September 27th 1647, the *Princess Amelia* ran onto a dangerous rock formation. The ship broke into eight sections, and 86 of the 109 occupants drowned, including Kieft and Bogardus. The priest of Manhattan surely went under with his arms raised to heaven and a prayer on his lips.



32 *Kuyter mistakes the barrel of a cannon for a fellow survivor, July 5th 1996, watercolor.*

The few survivors included two prisoners, Kuyter and Melijn. Gripping a piece of the ship's hull, Kuyter floated around in the turbulent sea. The barrel of a cannon projected up through an opening in the wreck. In the dim light of dawn the ex-prisoner thought he could discern another survivor. His joy was great until he came to the conclusion that the motionless figure must be a corpse, because he spoke to it, but received no reply.



33 *Everardus Bogardus on the ocean floor near Swansea. A reference to the symbol of the Ikhtus, July 4th 1996, watercolor.*

The body of Everardus Bogardus was never found. What remains of it rests amid the strange submarine vegetation, somewhere between the rocks deep on the floor of the ocean. These few remains wait impatiently — if we look through the eyes of Everardus Bogardus — for the Resurrection on the Last Day. In the absolute silence which reigns there they may occasionally be kissed by a fish, which for the priest would undoubtedly symbolize the sign of the Ikhtus.



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