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Deadline: Jan 20, 2026

Edward Wouk

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The Artist's Biography

CALL FOR PAPERS
In Rembrandt en de regels van de kunst (1961), Jan Emmens explored how, shortly after Rembrandt's death, critics portrayed him as a Pictor vulgaris who preferred low-life company, fallen women, and 'rough' brushwork rather than classicism and fine painting. Such early criticism had a lasting impact on the Romantic idea of the artist as a misunderstood genius, influencing how Rembrandt and his artworks are perceived to this very day. Art historians also indulge in biographical manipulation, as Machiel Bosman shows in Rembrandts plan: De ware geschiedenis van zijn faillissement (2019). He scrutinizes archival material to expose the fragility of biographical claims built on incomplete or interpreted evidence while inviting reflection on how artist's biographies are constructed, revised and contested. At the same time, new research on the artist, such as into Rembrandt's relationship to the African community in Amsterdam (Ponte, 2020), has expanded our understanding of the artist as well as provided an entry into further understanding the Black experience in the Dutch Republic.
Biography, the containment and shaping of the unruly details of a human life into writing by another, has been central to art history since the appearance Vasari's Lives of 1550. Authors of lives of Netherlandish artists, Karel van Mander, Joachim von Sandrart, Cornelis de Bie, Arnold Houbraken, Gerard de Lairesse, Filippo Baldinucci, Bainbrigg Buckeridge, Adriaan van der Willigen and Gerarda Hermina Marius, among others, all used biography to shape their accounts of art and included commentary on artists' life choices alongside evaluations and descriptions of their art. Netherlandish art history from the start has thus been enmeshed with the personal identity of the artists who contributed to it, and biography, however problematic or challenging, has always been implicated in art theory and the analysis of art objects. As Nanette Salomon showed in 'The Art Historical Canon: Sins of Omission' (1991), the selection of which artists' lives to include and how they were written effectively shaped the canon of art history.
Of late, however, analysis of biographies has also served as an instrument to expand and critique the canon with particular significance for the study of Netherlandish art. Aspects neglected in biographies like artists' gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and social class serve as a lens to ask new questions of familiar artworks or bring to the fore previously unknown or ignored artworks. Artists who did not appear in the standard biographies, especially women, are being rediscovered and given new "lives." Additionally, biographical studies can also move into the direction of cancel culture. Comedian Hannah Gadsby, in her Netflix show Nanette (2017) and her

exhibition, It's Pablomatic (2023) at the Brooklyn Museum castigated Picasso's misogyny. That same year, essayist Claire Dederer published Monsters. A fan's dilemma (2023), exploring the consequences of such feelings as described by Gadsby. What do we do with great art by bad people? How do we define what's bad and how does this relate to the art?
NKJ 78 invites contributions exploring examples of entanglement between artwork and artist biography that will advance our understanding of the significance and theoretical implications of biographies of artists from the Low Countries (present-day Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands), 1400-present. We are also interested in papers that consider the definition of artists' biographies and the potential value to art historical study for expanding it. The call is open for studies on a range of matters related to artists' biographies, including but not limited to:
- Historical attempts at separating artists from their art
- Identity as a driving artistic force
- Appropriation of an artist's biography to political ends
- Biography in the quest for greater representation in scholarship and museum collections
- Biography in relation to notions of genius or greatness
- Relationship of artists' biographies and the identity and status within culture
- Transgression/transgressive behavior as inherent artistic quality
- The relation between biography and cancel culture
- The power of time to change appreciation of artists' conduct
- The relationship between individual artist's identities and their broader societal contexts
- Differences in the form and function of artist biographies in northern and southern Europe
- Differences in the writing and perception of biographies between male and female artists
- How art theory shapes biography and vice versa
- Relating the life of the artist to the life of objects
- Portraits as a form of biography
- Artistic autobiography, including self portraits
- Expansion of the notion of biography
- Biography as a frame of cultural encounter, involving the locations, mobility and geographical affiliations of artists
- Biography and the development of art connoisseurship, including insights from technical and digital art history
- The literary tools of artists' biographical writing: ecphrasis, anecdote, the moral exemplum
The NKJ is dedicated to a particular theme each year and promotes innovative scholarship and articles that employ a diversity of approaches to the study of Netherlandish art in its wider context. For more information, see https://brill.com/view/serial/NKJ.
Contributions to the NKJ are limited to a maximum of 7,500 words, excluding notes and bibliography. Following a peer review process and receipt of the complete text, the editorial board will make a final decision on the acceptance of a paper.

Please send a 500-word proposal and a short CV to all volume editors by 20 January 2026:
Lieke Wijnia, l.wijnia@rug.nl
Natasha Seaman, nseaman@ric.edu
Ingrid Vermeulen, i.r.vermeulen@vu.nl

Schedule:
20 January 2026: Deadline for submission of abstracts

February 2026: Notifications about abstracts
1 November 2026: Submission of full articles for peer review
Early 2027: Decision on acceptance based on peer reviews
1 July 2027: Deadline revised articles
1 September 2027: Final articles, including illustrations & copyrights
Early 2028: Publication

Reference:
CFP: Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek Vol. 78 (2028). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 7, 2025 (accessed Oct 6, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/50810>.