

## **Press release on the death of S.A.C. Dudok van Heel (1938–2025)**

**The archivist Bas Dudok van Heel opened the eyes of art historians to the importance of religion and politics to the careers of Amsterdam artists. His publications on Rembrandt changed the way we think about the master.**

### **Rembrandt**

Bas Dudok van Heel began his career as an associate of the Amsterdam City Archives. From 1969 on he published an extensive body of articles on the history of the city. His interest in Amsterdam artists, built on exhaustive knowledge of the archives, fed into pioneering insights and discoveries in art history, most particularly concerning Rembrandt. His numerous articles on Rembrandt's sometimes fraught relations with Amsterdam magistrates and their families enriched Rembrandt studies beyond recognition. His negative judgment of Rembrandt's character led to a quarrelsome dispute with the Rembrandt expert Ernst van de Wetering.

While he published widely on other artists and collectors, it was Dudok van Heel's research on Rembrandt that brought him an international reputation. He was called upon to contribute to dozens of exhibitions on Dutch art in Europe and the United States. In 2006 he took a Ph.D on *The Young Rembrandt Among his Contemporaries: Religion and Painting in Leiden and Amsterdam* (dissertation in Dutch). With his insistence on the importance of politics, religion and family connections in the behavior of patrons as well as the careers of artists Dudok van Heel enlarged the scope of art history. His example has inspired following throughout the field.

Dudok van Heel's influence on art history was institutional as well as scholarly. In the 1990s he effectuated a bond between the Amsterdam City Archives and the Getty Research Institute that has become an indispensable resource for research in Dutch art.

### **Social history**

On a larger scope, Dudok van Heel devoted thirty years to a major social-historical study on the members of the mighty Heijnen-Boelen clan, showing how, for nearly half a millennium, they exercised key influence on politics, economics and culture, first in Amsterdam, and through marriages ultimately worldwide. The first of five volumes of *From Amsterdam Burghers to European Aristocrats: Their History and Portraits* (in Dutch) appeared in 2008. Weeks before his demise he completed the manuscript of the last three volumes. He died on 20 January 2025, after a lengthy illness.

### **For the family.**

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