Imagine you are a student, consulting the website of Carleton College to learn something about art history courses in the new trimester. You are especially interested in early modern European art and you have heard Professor Alison Kettering is a well-known specialist in this field. Her courses look just great on the website, and she even explains on her Learning and Teaching Center page how she organizes her classes. Under the intriguing heading: *Quirky Facts and Ticket to the Final* she describes how “facts,” which she asks students to reveal about themselves on the first day of class, function in the group dynamics of her classes, turning classroom discussions into meaningful exchanges between students and teacher. This sounds special! And she recounts how she relies on an evaluation of the course at the end of the term, the “ticket to the final,” to give her feedback to be used in a new course.

Alas, in May 2014 the unthinkable will happen: Alison Kettering will retire, after an impressive career as a scholar and a teacher, first in the Department of Art at Swarthmore College, then, since 1982, at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. During this long period Alison worked hard; she has always been interested in new research topics, elegant and playful in her writing and teaching, as well as thoughtful and warm in the many social relations and friendships that developed in the course of her teaching and research. In addition to this, Alison was also very active for many years in administrative work at Carleton College and in national professional organizations. Finally, she has been an engaged scholar; the contributions to this Festschrift recognize her wide interest in early modern European art and art history, especially in seventeenth-century Dutch art.

Sometimes there is no such thing as a mere coincidence. This turned out to be true for Alison, my family, and me during the last thirty-three years. A series of fateful events, or meaningful coincidences, deepened our relationship and made it possible for us to be close witnesses to Alison’s work and private life during this period in a very special way. It began in the late 1970s. Alison was at the time a frequent visitor to the Print Room of the Rijksmuseum, where she was finishing part of her studies for *The Dutch Arcadia: Pastoral Art and Its Audience in the Golden Age*, a pioneering study that opened up a new field in the history of Dutch art and remains a standard work to this day. In these years, the Print Room staff was considering a publication of the entire Ter Borch Studio Estate in the Rijksmuseum, a huge, hidden treasure of over a thousand sheets and texts, which had been in the collection for one hundred years. Alison was invited in the summer of 1979 to undertake the task of describing and commenting on all of these sheets for the Rijksmuseum. That summer she was on a scholarship in Amsterdam, lodging with my sister Emilie. They invited me to come over for tea, to get acquainted, and to chat a bit about my work at the Amsterdam Historical Museum.

During the following summers, and once over the course of an entire year in the company of her husband Frederick, Alison dedicated herself to the huge Ter Borch assignment. She worked hard, “from morning until late in the evening,” according to J. W. Niemeyer, head of the Print Room at the time, while also taking Dutch courses in order to improve her reading and speaking ability. Starting in 1985, Hans Luyten, a specialist on Dutch seventeenth-century literature, also took an active and indispensable part in the work, collaborating with Alison on the many literary texts in the estate. The entire project was coordinated by Peter Schatborn. Working together over the years, Alison became close friends with them and several other members of the Print Room staff.

During the first years, Alison lived at Emilie’s house, conveniently situated quite near the Rijksmuseum. Later she moved over to my house at, what a coincidence, the Gerard Terborgstraat. In the 1980s, while Alison became more familiar with the seven members of the Ter Borch family whose work was included in the collection in the Print...
Room, she also became an adopted member of the Kistemaker family, sharing our holidays on the Dutch island of Texel, as well as our birthdays and festive parties when she was in Holland. We, for our part, also got to know Frederick well during the year he stayed in the city.

The second coincidence occurred in 1982, when Alison was appointed to the Department of Art and Art History of Carleton College. This was the college where I had studied on a scholarship in 1963/64. I had always remembered this time as one of the highlights of my student years. Carleton was and is such a wonderful and academically challenging school. Being familiar with Carleton made it easier to share together what she was doing on the campus, in her classes in Boliou Hall, on her walks in The Arb. One of the highlights for both of us was a visit I paid to Carleton in 1996, when I was able to attend a couple of Alison’s classes and experience at firsthand her inspiring, witty teaching.

Drawings from the Ter Borch Studio Estate in the Rijksmuseum was published in two volumes in 1988, and Alison had time to develop new activities for her students. She designed a study trip to the Netherlands and Belgium, as part of her two-term course on Netherlandish art and took numerous groups of students to these countries during the fall and winter, so that they could see and study original works of art. Several times the group was in Amsterdam on December 5, the day on which Sinterklaas is celebrated. The students and, of course, Alison would join us at Gerard Terborgstraat for a party. We would sing Sinterklaas songs in Dutch, read Sinterklaas poems to each other, open presents and nibble on the traditional sweets. This brings me to the third fateful event that drew our families together. In 1990, in the middle of the Sinterklaas excitement, we mentioned that we just had bought an old house, in fact a ruin, in Liguria. Great, some students said spontaneously, can we come and work for you this summer? It was the start of more than fifteen years of collaboration on this house. Almost
sixty Carls came over to Italy to help us. They dragged cement and sand but also undertook wonderful construction and restoration work on our house, learning firsthand from some of the old farmers who still resided in the little village how to work in the old tradition with stone, masonry, roof tiles, and woodwork. All these years Alison coordinated and selected the applicants for this “restoration” project, and she once came to visit us on the spot.

On occasion, I have also had the privilege of participating in conferences, organized by Alison and/or where she was presenting a lecture. I remember, for example, attending the conference of Historians of Netherlandish Art in Boston in October 1993, Alison’s first year as a board member of the organization. She was chair of a workshop on representations of men and women. Earlier that year both of us were invited to present a lecture at the symposium The Public and Private in Dutch Culture of the Golden Age, organized by the Center for Renaissance and Baroque Studies of the University of Maryland. Many of our Dutch and American colleagues were present at this interdisciplinary symposium. On another occasion she asked me to join her at the colloquium 1648: War and Peace in Europe, held both in Münster and in Paris in 1998. This proved to be a fascinating opportunity to visit the famous room in Münster’s city hall, described in Alison’s article on Gerard Ter Borch’s painting depicting the ratification of the Peace of Münster in 1648. At these and other events, she always warmly introduced me to her colleagues and friends, something that was also very stimulating for me professionally.

It was great to meet again with some of these scholars of Netherlandish art four years ago, when HNA organized the conference Crossing Boundaries in Amsterdam, in cooperation with the University of Amsterdam and Codart. I remember there was an enthusiastic mingling of older and younger generations of HNA members, Codart members, and students and staff from Dutch universities and museums. In 2011 I published an article, based on a lecture presented during this conference, in the new and exciting online Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art. From the journal’s start, in 2009, Alison has been the inspiring and stimulating editor-in-chief.

Always looking for new horizons to discover, over the years Alison has been interested in various research topics. She has widened and deepened the interdisciplinary approach that she employed in her art historical research from the start. In time, this has led to new research themes related to gender issues, group portraits and portraiture in general, history painting, country life, occupations of Dutch men and women in the Golden Age, and the artist’s workshop. Recent fields of interest include Hendrick Goltzius’s use of early forms of pastel and food in art. In many ways the pastoral theme of her dissertation and first book and the two-volume publication of the Ter Borch Estate have been fundamental for much of her later work. The writers of the articles in this Festschrift pay a tribute to Alison’s long and rich career.

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