

The Huis ten Bosch

Post's Huis ten Bosch (also called the Zaal van Oranje or Oranjezaal)¹⁰ was begun in 1645 for Amalia van Solms and guided, even from the field of battle, by the criticisms of her husband Frederick Henry. After his death in 1647¹¹, the Princess had the Great Hall turned into a mausoleum for her husband. This would not have affected the structure, which was already complete. A portrait of Amalia van Solms in the cupola was until a recent restoration concealed by a later portrait showing her in mourning.¹²

The building consists essentially of a great cruciform hall (Plate 173) with bevelled inner corners, which rises through the house past a gallery into an octagonal drum and finally a dome. On two storeys clumsily related rooms are arbitrarily attached to the hall, but find an adequate external expression through corner pavilions which hide the shape of the hall. The great hall is felt from outside only through the drum and the cupola (Plate 174); these are satisfactorily¹³ linked to the roof – at least that of the main façades – by a festooned panel that descends over the ridge.

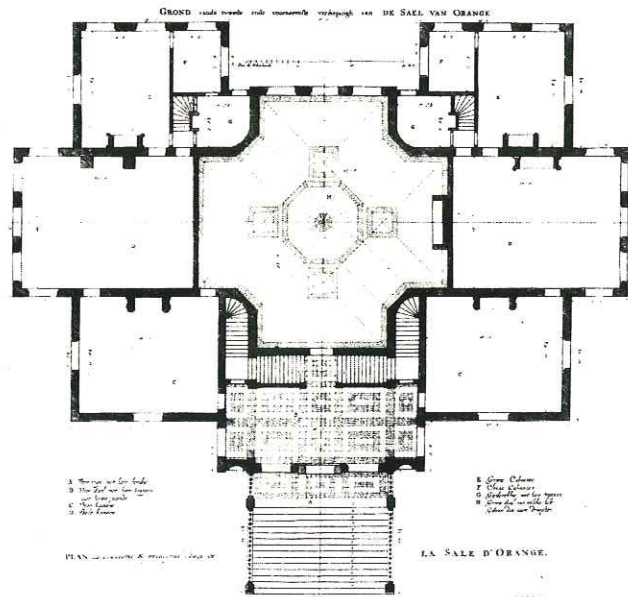
The basement boasts an attractive pattern in the usual Dutch floor tiling with big squares of white marble and polished black stone; so attractive that it is held by some¹⁴ to be the work of Jacob van Campen. There seems, however, to be no reason to deny this design to Post, as he created other exquisite interiors¹⁵ – the real difficulty starts with the piano nobile where two symmetrical staircases wind their way up in the most unexpected turnings, squeezed somewhere between the hall and the corner rooms.

Constantine Huygens advised on the programme and the choice of painters for the representation of Frederick Henry's life and triumphs, but Van Campen was called in to assist with the iconographic and decorative scheme (Plates 175–6). He supplied sketches of the subjects for the artists, and himself painted some of the canvases and it may have been he who designed the giant Corinthian pilasters on the bevelled corners which give at least a minimally tectonic character to the lavishly painted hall. Another surprising feature may also be Van Campen's: the painted pageantry is carried continuously across the corners of the cross through illusionistic arches – a theatrical and fully Baroque device. Daniel Marot made a superb engraving of the hall in 1686 (Plate 177).

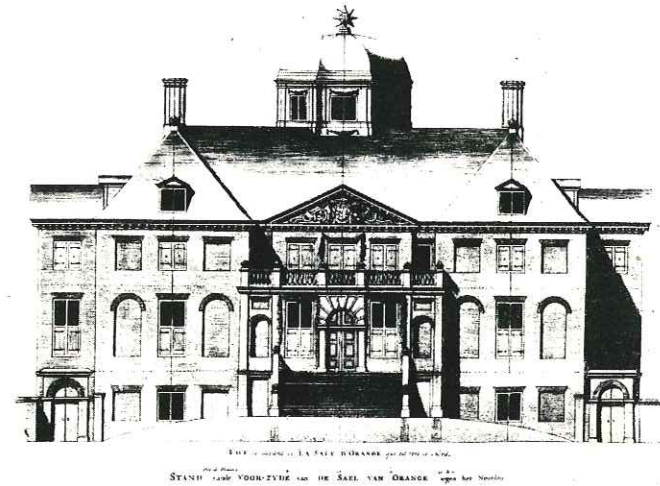
The painting of the hall was to be done by the most esteemed painters available, but

owing to the rarity of large-scale commissions in the Republic, Jacob Jordaens – from the Southern Netherlands – was relied on for the triumphal scene. The Dutch painters were Gerard van Honthorst, Theodoor van Thulden and Pieter de Grebber from the Hague, Caesar van Everdingen from Alkmaar, Salomon de Bray from Haarlem, Jacob van Campen from Amersfoort and Jan Lievens from Amsterdam. The result is as good as can be expected from official work to which a dozen or so painters contributed.¹⁶

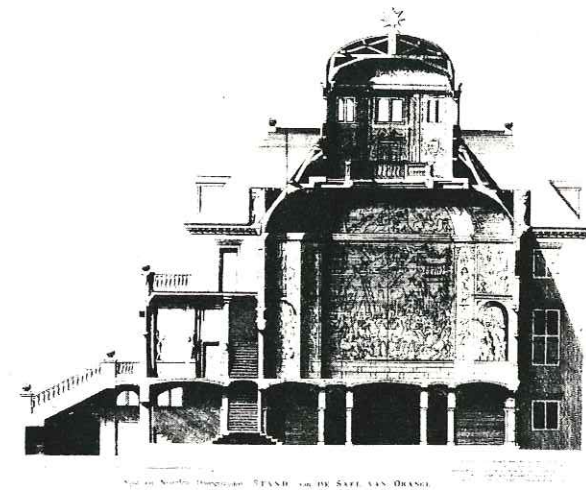
The Zaal itself (later turned into a royal palace), was much improved by Marot's addition in the eighteenth century of large double-folded wings which make the whole composition more fluent and more in sympathy with the landscape.



173. Pieter Post: *Huis ten Bosch*, the Hague, begun 1645. Main Storey.



174. Pieter Post: *Huis ten Bosch*. Front.



175. Pieter Post: *Huis ten Bosch*. Section.