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OLD MASTERS

2022

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# SALOMON LILIAN

OLD MASTERS

2022

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### Ars Longa Vita Brevis

What a difficult two years we have had. First two years of Covid, followed by the war in Ukraine. But the famous expression says it all: Ars Longa Vita Brevis. This is the Latin version of the Greek proverb. It means 'Art is forever, life is short'. Art lives longer than humanity, Art is there for all generations. Therefore we are indeed very proud to be able to produce our 28th annual catalogue of Dutch and Flemish Old Master Paintings. Only last year we made a special catalogue on the *Portrait of Adriaen Moens* by Anthony van Dyck.

We had two years to look for new acquisitions, and we succeeded in making some discoveries. All the nineteen paintings are spectacular and important as examples of their own genre. We show a magnificent *Self-tronie* by Jacob Backer. This painting is a new addition to the oeuvre of Backer. Another portrait is the *Portrait of a Man* by Govert Flinck, that hasn't been seen in public for over a century. Also, the *Portrait of an Old Man in Contemplation* by Jacob Jordaens is an important addition to his oeuvre. These three portraits are great examples of Dutch and Flemish portraiture during the 1620s and 1630s.

The *Kolf Player* by Gesina ter Borch and Gerard ter Borch, depicting their younger brother Moses, is a very interesting and eye-catching painting. Another portrait is the *Young Lady* by Lucas Cranach the Elder, which we have identified as Princess Aemilia of Saxony. Painted circa 1540, this strikingly attractive painting is a late work by Cranach the Elder. What a beauty.

Then we are showing the *Backgammon Players* by Michael Sweerts. This is one of the largest and most impressive paintings by this enigmatic artist.

We are also showing some beautiful landscapes. The small Salomon van Ruysdael, the Jan van Goyen and the Esaias van de Velde are all three very nice examples of Dutch Landscape painting in the 17th century. We also bring a collection of still lifes: a small copper by Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder, a classic Pieter Claesz and a pair of trompe l'oeil still lifes by Christoffel Pierson.

So, a diverse new important collection. I hope you will enjoy reading this catalogue as much as we did finding them and researching them.

I would like to thank George Keyes who wrote the entry on the painting by Esaias van de Velde, and Fred Meijer who wrote the essay on the Ambrosius Bosschaert. I am thankful to Gwendolyn Boeve and Lara van Wassenaer and their teams for the restoration of the works. I am thankful as well to Wendela Wagenaar-Burgemeister and Jasper Hillegers, who conducted the entire project as well as thorough art historical research on the paintings before writing entries, and to Natasha Broad, who edited them.

May 2022  
Salomon Lilian

### cat. no.

- 1 Jacob Backer
- 2 Ter Borch family Studio  
Attributed to Gesina ter Borch and Gerard ter Borch the Younger
- 3 Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder
- 4 Pieter Claesz
- 5 Lucas Cranach the Elder
- 6 Gaspar de Crayer
- 7 Govert Flinck
- 8 Jan van Goyen
- 9 Jacob Jordaens
- 10 Pieter Lastman
- 11 Master of the Schwartzberg Portraits
- 12 Christoffel Pierson
- 13 Jan van Ravesteyn
- 14 Circle of Rembrandt
- 15 Salomon van Ruysdael
- 16 Willem Schellinks
- 17 Michael Sweerts
- 18 Esaias van de Velde

cat. no. 1

**Jacob Adriaensz Backer**

Harlingen 1608/09 – 1651 Amsterdam

*Tronie of a Bearded Man with a Large Beret*

Signed lower right: JAB (in ligature)

Oil on panel

66 x 51 cm.

**Provenance:**

Vienna, collection professor Eduard Mahler (1857-1945), by descent

Brazil, collection of Mahler's daughter, from 1930 onward, thence by decent, until 2020

**Literature:**

Unpublished

**Jacob Backer**

Jacob Backer was born in 1608 into a Mennonite family in Harlingen, a university town in Friesland.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after Jacob's birth his mother Hilcke Volckertsdr died, and when his father Adriaen Tjercksz, a baker (hence the name Backer, which the siblings later adopted), re-married Elsge Roelofs from Amsterdam in 1611, the family moved there. Elsge, a well-to-do widow, owned a thriving bakery at the Nieuwendijk (current house number 6) where many Mennonites lived. When she died in 1614, Adriaen inherited both the house and a considerable sum of money. Backer thus grew up in a comfortable middle-class environment. It is not known to whom he was first apprenticed, yet it has been suggested with good reason that it might have been the painter Jan Pynas (1581-1631), who co-owned a house down the street and taught Backer's documented friend and peer Steven van Goor (1608-c. 1660).<sup>2</sup> In the later half of the 1620s Backer moved back to Friesland, to Leeuwarden. There he joined the workshop of the Mennonite teacher, painter and art entrepreneur Lambert Jacobsz (c. 1593/94-1636), whose family held close relations with the Backer/Roelofs family and who, like Backer, grew up at the Amsterdam Nieuwendijk before set-

ting in the north in 1621. Around 1628 Jacobsz resolved upon an ambitious business expansion, probably the reason he needed capable assistance: Backer and the younger Govert Flinck (1615-1660). In addition to producing smaller paintings in the style of the so-called 'Pre-Rembrandtists' (Jacobsz might have studied with Jan Pynas as well), he then embarked on a second line of large-figure history works, inspired by the work of Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) and Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641) from Antwerp, Jan Lievens (1607-1674) from Leiden, Pieter de Grebber (c. 1600-1652/53) from Haarlem, and the Utrecht Caravaggists.<sup>3</sup> Whereas Flinck was an actual apprentice, Backer's role was that of chief assistant, who was allowed considerable freedom. Backer and Flinck stayed with Jacobsz until 1632/33. At that point, as Arnold Houbraken states, both 'were so advanced that they could spread their wings [...] and move to Amsterdam'.<sup>4</sup> Whereas Flinck succeeded Rembrandt (1606-1669) in 1635 as *chef d'atelier* in the studio of the ambitious art entrepreneur Hendrick Uylenburgh (1587-1661) who held business ties with Lambert Jacobsz, Backer settled independently and achieved fame among the Amsterdam elite as a painter of fashionable large-scale histories, portraits, and bust size





Fig. 1 Jacob Backer, *The Drinker (Allegory of Taste)*, c. 1634/35, oil on panel, 71.5 x 60 cm., Berlin, Gemäldegalerie

*tronies*, painted with a swift hand and feeling for colour. Accordingly, he received important commissions for large group portraits.<sup>5</sup> Backer remained a bachelor all his life. In August 1651, shortly after adopting the Remonstrant faith and at the age of only 42 years old, he died and was buried in the Noorderkerk.

Upon his return to Amsterdam in the early 1630s, Backer found the artistic landscape of his hometown to have drastically changed. When he left in the later 1620s, Pieter Lastman (1583-1633) and his circle had dominated the scene with their medium-figure history works. The portraiture market was in the hands of the capable if conservative Cornelis van der Voort (1576-) and his pupils Nicolaes Eliasz Pickenoy (1588-1650) and Thomas de Keyser (1596-1667), while genre painters such

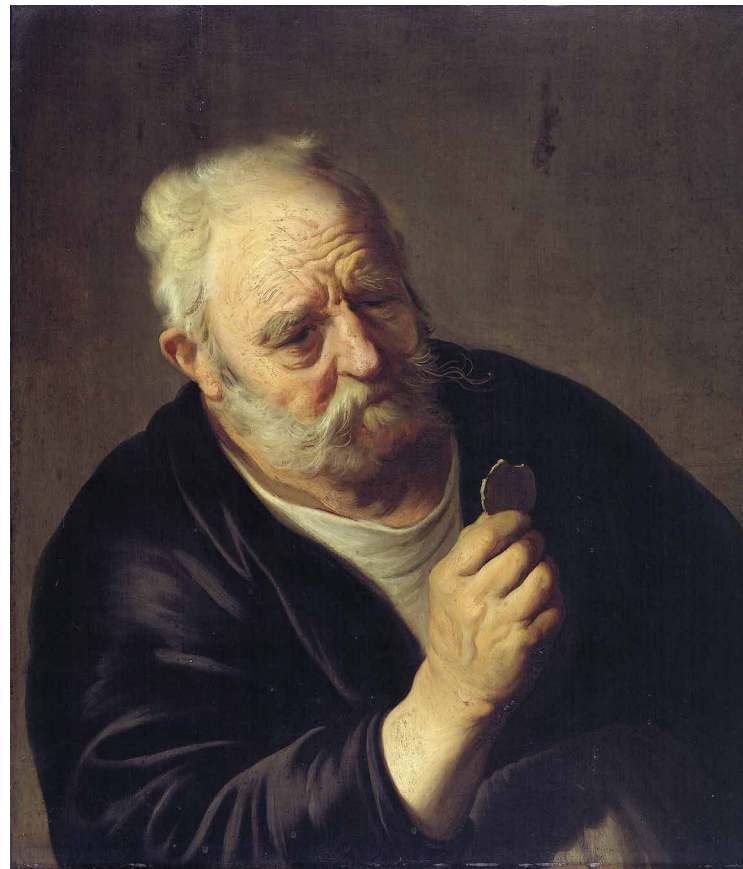


Fig. 2 Jacob Backer, *Old Man with a Mirror Fragment (Allegory of Sight)*, oil on panel, 71.5 x 60.5 cm., Berlin, Gemäldegalerie

as Pieter Codde (1599-1678), David Vinckboons (1576-1631) and Willem Duyster (1599-1635) produced small-figure genre works. Head studies, *tronies* and related fanciful busts such as those painted in Antwerp, Leiden, Haarlem and Utrecht were hardly produced in Amsterdam. This all changed in 1631/32, with the arrival of Rembrandt. Backer, who had acquainted himself with Rembrandt's work in Leeuwarden, became Rembrandt's main competitor in Amsterdam's single bust *tronie* market. In the following years Backer – in a manner that was completely his own – painted a motley crew of greybeards, saints, philosophers, shepherds, shepherdesses, and other men and women dressed in fanciful cloaks and velvet feathered hats. The present bust, a recent discovery and a marvelous addition to Backer's oeuvre, fits in with this group.

### The Bearded Man

Against a dark green background, an imposing, ruddy-bearded and longhaired man, his head turned rightwards, peers out at us with curiosity, from underneath a rather large brown beret. Over his white undergarment this man wears a greenish-grey doublet, covered by a brown fur-lined cloak, which is fastened by gold brocade braids on the chest. Narrow-framed in the picture plane, his presence is direct and intense. While essentially good-natured, he exudes a robust stoutness. This is partly due to his commanding physique, but it goes hand in hand with the engaging painterly qualities of Backer's brushwork, specifically in the *peinture* of the face. Possibly more than anywhere else in his oeuvre, Backer displays his turbulent side here. The beard and the moustache are built up from an irregular variety of lighter and darker brown curls, the mouth is rendered with a bold dark smear above the pink of the lower lip, and the eyes and eyelids – trademark Backer – are executed with admirable swiftness. Still, Backer's brilliance shows most of all in the impasto of the incarnate. Rough, patchy and dynamic, with thick highlights alternating with open areas of ground layer to three-dimensional effect, it is the result of spirited intuition, as much as skillful execution.

Chronologically, the present painting seems to belong to the mid-1630s as it fits in with other such works by Backer from that period. Two busts in Berlin, datable to c. 1634/35 and representing the senses *Taste* (a man holding an empty glass) and *Sight* (an old man looking at a shard of glass) show, although not to the same extent, a similar bravura (figs. 1, 2).<sup>6</sup> In the sitter of *Taste* (a.k.a. *The Drinker*), moreover, we might well recognize the same model, whose traits also occur – to various extents – elsewhere in Backer's work. We find similar traits, for instance, in the 1640 (or 1641?) dated *Portrait of a Man with a Velvet Beret* (fig. 3).<sup>7</sup> Although the latter *tronie* belongs to a subsequent phase in Backer's development, it sets the timeframe for our picture, which should likely be dated c. 1634-1637.

Iconographically, the *Bearded Man* seems, at first, sparse for clues. At least it is clear that the sitter is not dressed in contemporary Dutch fashion. Rather, his archaic clothing, his characteristic beard with longer growth on the jawline and less on the cheeks and chin, and the green background are reminiscent of early sixteenth century German portraits, such as that of Frederick the Wise (1463-1525), Elector of Saxony by Lucas Cranach the Elder (c. 1472-1553) (fig. 4). What the possible implications of this association might be will be addressed below.



Fig. 3 Jacob Backer, *Tronie of a Man with a Velvet Beret*, 1641 (?), oil on panel, 67 x 55 cm., sale London, Christie's, 14 February 1975, lot 47



Fig. 4 Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Portrait of Frederick the Wise (1463-1525), Elector of Saxony*, 1525, oil on panel, 39.8 x 26.8 cm., Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum



Fig. 5  
Rembrandt, *Self-Portrait transformed into a Tronie*, c. 1633/36, oil on panel, 56 x 47 cm., Berlin, Gemäldegalerie



Fig. 6  
Rembrandt, *Self-Portrait with a Cap and a Fur-Trimmed Cloak*, 1634, oil on panel, 58.3 x 47.4 cm., Berlin, Gemäldegalerie



Fig. 7  
Rembrandt, *Self-Portrait with Cap Pulled Forward*, c. 1631, etching, 5 x 4.2 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 8  
Rembrandt, *Self-Portrait in a Cap and Scarf*, 1633, etching, 13.3 x 10.4 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (in reverse)

#### Backer looks at Rembrandt

The *Bearded Man* thus slips through Backer's more obvious *tronie* categories, the greybeards, shepherds and shepherdesses, children, scholars, orientals and other fanciful types. In fact, Backer seems to connect here – more than elsewhere<sup>8</sup> – with the imagery of Rembrandt, specifically with his self-portraits. Striking parallels are found in two works of comparable size from the mid 1630s, Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait transformed into a Tronie*, which was initially conceived as a self-portrait around 1633, to be reworked into a *tronie* c. 1636/37, and the 1634-dated *Self-Portrait with a Cap and a Fur-Trimmed Cloak*, both in Berlin (figs. 6, 7). In these works we observe a similar conception of space, composition, clothing and a focus on personality. It is, moreover, interesting to note how in the former work, Rembrandt experimented heavily with the 'rough manner' so ostentatiously apparent in our *Bearded Man* as well.<sup>9</sup> The mentioning of 'Rembrandt's conterfeytsel Antycks' ('Rembrandt's portrait in antique fashion', here referring to 'old' in general) in the 1657 inventory of the Amsterdam art dealer Johannes de Renialme informs us about how such works were perceived, namely as deliberately historicizing. Just as the slashed and feathered cap added later in the former work transformed the initial self-portrait into a *tronie* of a 'Landsknecht' (a sixteenth century mercenary), the beret worn by Rembrandt in the latter self-portrait was likewise characteristic of sixteenth century fashion.<sup>10</sup> This clothing item could suggest a range of possible meanings – artistry, erudition, or reference to painters of the past. It is safe to say that Rembrandt, who is

forever associated with it, was largely responsible for its revival in seventeenth century Dutch art. From the later 1620s on, he depicted himself wearing numerous variations of this headgear, both in paintings and in prints (figs. 8, 9) that show a marked affinity with our *Bearded Man*, often in combination with a fur cloak. This, then, raises the question to which degree Backer's *Bearded Man* might likewise allude to himself. Are we looking at a self-portrait?

#### Backer's portrait

Although no autograph painted self-portrait remains, we are reasonably informed about Backer's appearance. A self-portrait drawing dated 1638 (fig. 10), a painted copy after a lost self-portrait (fig. 11), and two prints – one by Pieter de Balliu (1613-1660) after a drawn self-portrait, the other by Theodor Matham (1605/06-1676) after a portrait of Backer by Thomas de Keyser – have been preserved (figs. 12, 13).<sup>11</sup> In addition, an anonymous mezzotint depicting a man wearing a beret is proposed here to portray Backer as well, and was possibly done after a now-lost self-portrait, or a portrait of Backer by another painter, perhaps Govert Flinck (fig. 14).<sup>12</sup> From these portraits we get a fairly accurate idea of Backer's face, although it should be noted that – except for the 1638 drawing – they would date from the 1640s. A consistent feature in these portraits are the eyes, which are relatively wide apart, rather large and half-moon-shaped, with thick eyelids. The nostrils are flared, and the (double) chin slightly recedes. In addition to a moustache Backer sported a modest goatee.



Fig. 9  
Jacob Backer, *Self-Portrait*, 1638, black chalk on paper, 14.3 x 14.7 cm., Vienna, Albertina



Fig. 10  
After (?) Jacob Backer, *Self-Portrait*, oil on canvas, 55.6 x 48.4 cm., sale New York, Sotheby's, 21 May 1998, lot 322

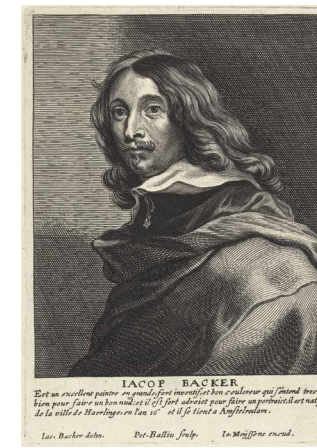


Fig. 11  
Pieter de Balliu after Jacob Backer, *Self-Portrait*, engraving, 16.2 x 11.5 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

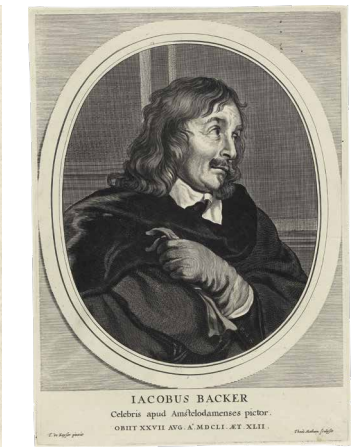


Fig. 12  
Theodor Matham after Thomas de Keyser, *Portrait of Jacob Backer*, engraving, 33.9 x 24.3 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Besides those portraits in the stricter sense, several of Backer's *tronies* (and two figures in his history pieces) have been variously identified as depicting him (figs. 14-24).<sup>13</sup> In 1926, the first compiler of Backer's oeuvre, Kurt Bauch, recognized Backer's features in the Budapest *Violin Player* (fig. 17), the *Young Man with a Breastplate* in Munich (fig. 22), nowadays thought to be a copy after a lost original, and the 1644 *Shepherd* in the Mauritshuis, The Hague (fig. 23).<sup>14</sup> By 1983, Werner Sumowski, listing Backer's oeuvre in his *Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schüler*, considered six *tronies* to be self-portraits: the Berlin *Drinker* (fig. 16), the Budapest *Violin Player*, the Hague *Shepherd*, two more *Shepherds* in Leeuwarden and the United States (figs. 15, 19), and a *Man with a Black Cap and a Velvet Blue Cloak* (fig. 20).<sup>15</sup> Subsequent in-depth studies, such as those by Hans-Joachim Raupp on artists' portraits, and Dagmar Hirschfelder on *tronies*, and entries on individual works, likewise identified Backer in several of his *tronies*.<sup>16</sup> Backer-expert Peter van den Brink further remarked on 'the same figure type' in the Berlin *Drinker*, the Leeuwarden *Shepherd* and the figure of Uriah in Backer's *David and Uriah* history piece in Dresden (fig. 14), while Jaap van der Veen recognized Backer's traits in one of the figures in his *Family Portrait with John the Baptist Preaching* from 1637 (fig. 18).<sup>17</sup> Just recently, the Berlin *Drinker* was included in the exhibition *Rembrandt in Amsterdam: Creativity and Competition* in Ottawa and Frankfurt as a prime example of a self-portrait *tronie* by a colleague of Rembrandt, testifying to the success of the 'Rembrandt-brand'.<sup>18</sup> Alternatively, other scholars have understandably

Fig. 13 Anonymous after Jacob Backer (?) or Govert Flinck (?), (Self?) Portrait of Jacob Backer, mezzotint, 12.5 x 9.6 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



formulated more reserved judgments, such as Michiel Franken, who saw 'not enough similarities' with the official portraits of Backer to accept the Mauritshuis *Shepherd* as a self-portrait.<sup>19</sup> More generally, Thomas Döring has remarked how Backer in these *tronies* (e.g. The Berlin *Drinker* and the Hague *Shepherd*) infused individual facial features with strongly standardized elements.<sup>20</sup>

Overviewing the 'tronie-group', it seems evident that the facial range among the individual works diverges considerably, in fact to such an extent that it seems impossible to distill an unambiguous self-portrait. However, several recurring features (the broad, melancholy eyes, the



Figs. 14-24  
 14) *David and Uriah* (detail of Uriah), 1632/3, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie; 15) *Shepherd*, c. 1633, Leeuwarden, Fries Museum; 16) *Allegory of Taste* (a.k.a. *The Drinker*), 1634/35, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie; 17) *Allegory of Hearing* (a.k.a. *The Violin Player*), 1634/35, Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum; 18) *Family Portrait with John the Baptist* (detail of the painter), 1637, The Netherlands, private collection; 19) *Young Man as a Shepherd*, United States, private collection; 20) *Head of a Man with a Black Cap and a Velvet Blue Cloak*, c. 1640/41, formerly London, collection Ronald Cook (1973); 21) *Tronie of a Man with a Velvet Beret*, 1640 (or 1641?), sale London, Christie's, 14 February 1975, lot 47; 22) after Backer, *Young Man with a Breastplate*, Munich, Alte Pinakothek; 23) *Shepherd*, 1644, The Hague, Mauritshuis; 24) *Shepherd*, c. 1644, Paris, private collection

somewhat receding double chin and the (facial) hair among the more consistent of these) also provide a common denominator, that can best, indeed exclusively be understood as going back on Backer's own face, without necessarily every time referring to Backer's own persona explicitly.

#### A multi-layered self-tronie

The terminology seems part of the issue here. Whereas 'self-portrait' implies the artist's intention to explicitly portray him or herself, the actual situation in many cases is probably more accurately described by saying that the painter used himself as a model. Gary Schwartz recently commented on this issue in the context of the Rijksmuseum's purchase of Rembrandt's *Standard-Bearer* of 1636.<sup>21</sup> In determining whether Rembrandt's work could qualify as a self-portrait, Schwartz pointed to a 1657 notarial deed that documents the sale of paintings by the merchant Dirck Cattenburch to his sisters, among them 'a painting being a tronie painted by Rembrandt after himself.'<sup>22</sup> Following this spot-on contemporary phrasing that perfectly captures the genre's ambiguity, Schwartz proposed the term 'self-non-portrait' for Rembrandt's *Standard-Bearer* in particular, and many of his *tronies* in which we tend to recognize his traits. For this latter group, one could likewise speak of self-*tronies*.

Returning to the *Bearded Man*, it seems clear that it shares recurring elements with several of Backer's self-*tronies*, from which we conclude that Backer indeed used his own visage as a model. Moreover, in depicting himself with the beret and the fur cloak, he deliberately connected with Rembrandt's 'antyc' self-(non)-portraits, with which Rembrandt intended to create a visual link with portraits of famous (Northern) predecessors, that he knew well through prints.<sup>23</sup> Backer seems to have done the same here, and he even took it a step further by modelling his facial hair in sixteenth century fashion. In this respect the *Bearded Man* aligns neatly with (self-)portraits of/by famous Northern artists of the previous century, such as Albrecht Dürer (1471-1428), Lucas Gassel (c. 1488-1568/69), Georg Pencz (1500-1550) and Heinrich Aldegrever (c. 1502-1555/61) (figs. 25-28) and can thus be seen as more than a standard self-*tronie*, in that it truly alludes to Backer's own profession, and thus to himself as an artist. Lastly, we might speculate that Backer intended to connect to more than Rembrandt's imagery alone. Tellingly Kurt Bauch, in his 1926 monograph on Backer, describes the *Berlin Drinker* – whose countenance relates most strikingly to our *Bearded Man* of all of Backer's self-*tronies* – not as a self-portrait of Backer, but as 'Der Geschmack – Freies Bildnis Rembrandts', 'the Taste – Free portrait of Rembrandt'.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, it is not difficult to see where Bauch was coming from. As with our *Bearded*

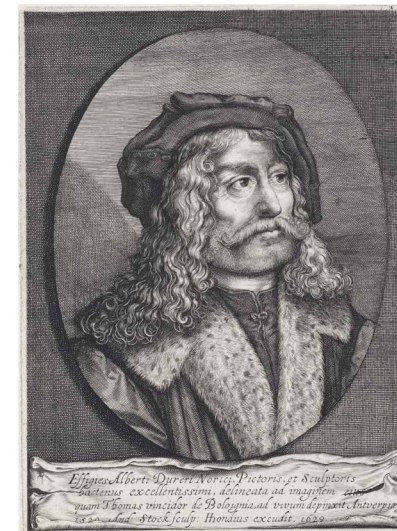


Fig. 25  
 Andries Jacob Storck after Tommaso da Bologna, *Portrait of Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)*, 1629, engraving, 22.3 x 16.5 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 26  
 Jacob Binck, *Portrait of the Painter Lucas Gassel (c. 1488-1568/69)*, engraving, 17.2 x 13 cm., London, British Museum



Fig. 27  
 Heinrich Aldegrever, *Self-Portrait*, 1537, engraving, 19.7 x 12.6 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 28  
 Anonymous, *Portrait of the Painter Georg Pencz (1500-1550)*, engraving, 12.3 x 8.1 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

*Man*, the nose and the fuller traits of *The Drinker* are indeed certainly reminiscent of Rembrandt's. Viewed as such – as a self-*tronie* by Backer as an 'antycck' artist, with a distinct nod to Rembrandt's imagery and Rembrandt's portrait – we are, with the discovery of this new work, treated to a thrilling, fresh and inter-referential slice of Amsterdam's artistic life of the 1630s at its best.

JH

#### Notes

- For an extensive biography on Backer, see J. van der Veen, 'Jacob Backer, een schets van zijn leven', in: P. van den Brink, J. van der Veen, *Jacob Backer (1608/9-1651)*, exh. cat. Amsterdam, Museum het Rembrandthuis, Aachen, Suermond-Ludwig-Museum 2008-2009, pp. 10-25. For an analysis of Backer's artistic production, see P. van den Brink, 'Uitmunten schilder in het groot : De schilder en tekenaar Jacob Adriaensz Backer', in: Amsterdam/Aachen 2008-2009, pp. 26-84. See also E.J. Sluijter, *Rembrandt's Rivals : History Painting in Amsterdam 1630-1650*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia 2015, pp. 110-127; P. van den Brink, 'Tussen Rubens en Rembrandt : Jacob Adriaensz. Backer als portret- en historieschilder in Amsterdam', in: *Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis* 2016, pp. 4-39.
- Van der Veen, op. cit., pp. 14-15.
- On Lambert Jacobsz' studio and the different kinds of production practiced there, see J. Hillegers, 'Lambert Jacobsz (c. 1598-1636) en zijn werkplaats. Atelierpraktijk in Leeuwarden omstreeks 1630', in: *Jaarboek De Vrije Fries* 89 (2009), pp. 67-92 (available online: <http://www.friesgenootschap.nl/index.php/nl/online-artikelen>); J. Hillegers, 'The Lambert years: Govert Flinck in Leeuwarden, ca. 1629 – ca. 1633', in: S. Dickey (ed.), *Ferdinand Bol and Govert Flinck : New Research*, Amsterdam 2017, pp. 45-65.
- A. Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, 3 vols., Amsterdam 1718-1721, 2 (1719), p. 20: 'Te Lewaarden gekomen vond hy Jakob Backer een geschikt en yverig Jongman tot zyn byslaap en gezelschap in de Konst, die met hem (na dat zy nu zoo veer gevordert waren dat zy op eigen wicken konden vliegen) naar Amsterdam vertrok [...]'.  
P. van den Brink, *Oeuvrecatalogus van de schilderijen van Jacob Backer*, in: Amsterdam/Aachen 2008-2009, pp. 204-249, also consultable on dvd including B-E categories: *Jacob Adriaensz Backer – Complete overview of his paintings*, further referred to as DOC (Digital Oeuvre Catalogue), nos. A21, 92, 132.
- See D. Hirschfelder, in: Amsterdam/Aachen 2008-2009, cat. nos. A9a-b; DOC, nos. A29, A30. The works were part of a series of the five senses. A *Violin Player* in Budapest, depicting the sense of Hearing, also belongs to this series. See DOC, no. A31.
- DOC, no. 82. See also DOC, no. 83, which employs the same model.
- Whereas Backer was an independent artist who sailed with his own compass rather than relying on Rembrandt (as opposed to his younger friend Flinck, who deliberately immersed himself in Rembrandt's manner) they did operate in the same art market and produced comparable products. That Backer took an interest in certain works by Rembrandt, seems just as logical as *vice versa*, Rembrandt looking at Backer and others when he suddenly started painting large-scale history works around 1634/35.
- As observed by E. Van de Wetering, in: J. Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, 6 vols., The Hague etc. 1982-2015, 4 (*The Self-Portraits*, 2005), pp. 216, 219, 220 (figs. 202-203, 603.)
- For a discussion of the implications of the beret in Rembrandt's paintings, and of 'antycck' clothing, see M. de Winkel, 'Rembrandt's clothes – Dress and meaning in his self-portraits', in: Bruyn et al. 1982-2015, 4 (2005), pp. 45-87, pp. 60-63.
- For the drawing, see W. Sumowski, *Drawings of the Rembrandt School*, 10 vols., New York 1979-1992, 1 (1979), pp. 22-23, cat. no. 4; T. Döring, in: Amsterdam/Aachen 2008-2009, cat. no. 41; for the copy after Backers supposed *Self-Portrait*, see DOC, no. C55. For the prints, see Amsterdam/Aachen 2008-2009, p. 10, fig. 1 (Matham); p. 28, fig. 1 (De Balliu). De Keyser's painting, of which a black/white photo exists, was last recorded in a sale, Amsterdam, Mensing & Zoon, 27 April 1939, lot 494.
- The mezzotint also exists in another version (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. RP-P-1910-1605). The sitter not only shows a remarkable resemblance to the copy after Backer's presumed *Self-Portrait* (here fig. 10) and the print by Matham after De Keyser (here fig. 12), a striking compositional parallel is found in Govert Flinck's *Self-Portrait* of around 1640 in the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne, in

- which Flinck wears a near-identical beret (topped by a feather) and the same scarf. See N. Middelkoop, L. van Sloten P. Larsen (eds.), *Ferdinand Bol en Govert Flinck : Rembrandts meesterleerlingen*, exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rembrandthuis / Amsterdam Museum 2017-2018, pp. 36-37, cat. no. 13, fig. 33. If this startling resemblance is due to the fact that both painters – who remained friends in Amsterdam – decided to paint their self-portraits in a similar fashion, or that Flinck might have painted a portrait of Backer (as a pendant to his own portrait?), after which these mezzotints were done, remains an open question.
- Figs 14-24, with DOC nos. and Amsterdam/Aachen 2008-2009 cat. nos. and authors: 14) A15, cat. no. 5 (V. Manuth); 15) A25; 16) A30, cat. no. 9b (D. Hirschfelder); 17: A31; 18) A47, cat. no. 14 (J. van der Veen); 19) A56; 20) A83; 21) A82; 22) C36; 23) A101, cat. no. 24 (M. Franken); 24) A102.
  - K. Bauch, *Jacob Adriaensz Backer : Ein Rembrandtschüler aus Friesland*, Berlin 1926, cat. nos. 73, 81, 86.
  - W. Sumowski, *Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schuler*, Landau/Pfalz 1983-1994, 1 (1983), cat. nos. 23, 24, 33, 35, 36, 40, with reference to previous authors and titles. See further Sumowski 1983-1994, 5, cat. no. 1993 (*Shepherd*, Paris, private collection, our fig. 24).
  - H.-J. Raupp, *Untersuchungen zu Künstlerbildnis und Künstlerdarstellung in den Niederlanden im 17. Jahrhundert*, Hildesheim 1984, pp. 189, 223, figs. 89, 127 (*Shepherd*, The Hague, Mauritshuis; *Shepherd*, Leeuwarden, Fries Museum); D. Hirschfelder, *Tronie und Porträt in der niederländischen Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 2008, cat. nos. 15-17 (*Shepherd*, The Hague, Mauritshuis; *Man with a Breastplate*, Munich, Alte Pinakothek; *Man with a Black Cap and a Velvet Blue Cloak*, formerly London, collection Ronald Cook); B. Broos, in: B. Broos, A. Van Suchtelen, *Portraits in the Mauritshuis 1430-1790*, The Hague/Zwolle 2004, pp. 29-31, cat. no. 2.
  - P. van den Brink, '*David geeft Uria de brief voor Joab*: Niet Govert Flinck, maar Jacob Backer', in: *Oud Holland* 111 (1997), pp. 177-186, pp. 182-183. I wish to thank Peter van den Brink for sharing his thoughts on the subject of Backer's self-portraits. Like me, he is of the opinion that these works contain, to various degrees, elements of Backer's portrait. This idea extends to the present work (which Van den Brink has given the catalogue number A148), in which he recognizes elements of Backer's countenance. For Van der Veen, see note 14.
  - See J. Sander, 'Rembrandt as a Brand', in: J. Sander, S. Dickey, *Rembrandt in Amsterdam : creativity and competition*, exh. cat. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada, Frankfurt-am-Main, Städel Museum 2021-2022, pp. 82-95, pp. 86, 90, pl. 37.
  - See note 14. In addition, Van den Brink, DOC, no. A25 (Leeuwarden *Shepherd*) has expressed reservations concerning the extent to which one can speak of a true self-portrait in the cases of the *Shepherds* in Leeuwarden and The Hague.
  - T. Döring, in: Amsterdam/Aachen 2008-2009, cat. no. 41.
  - See <http://www.garyschwartzarthistorian.nl/402-of-arms-and-rembrandts-self-non-portraits/> (website consulted April 2022).
  - Remdoc 1658/22: 'een schilderij sijnde een tronye door Rembrant nae hem selven geschildert'. See: <http://remdoc.huygens.knaw.nl/#/document/remdoc/e12793> (website consulted April 2022).
  - See De Winkel 2005, pp. 70-74; V. Manuth, 'Rembrandt and the artist's self portrait: tradition and reception', in: C. White, Q. Buvelot, *Rembrandt by himself*, exh. cat. London, National Gallery, The Hague, Mauritshuis 1999-2000, pp. 38-57, esp. pp. 42-46.
  - Bauch 1926, pp. 30, 82, cat. no. 72: 'Backer [hat] den nur zwei Jahre älteren Meister [= Rembrandt] im "Geschmack" frei porträtiert'.



**Ter Borch family Studio**

**Attributed to Gesina ter Borch and Gerard ter Borch the Younger**

1631 – Zwolle – 1690

Zwolle 1617 – 1681 Deventer

*Portrait of Moses ter Borch (1645-1667) Holding a Kolf Club*

Oil on panel

39.4 by 26.7 cm.<sup>1</sup>

**Provenance:**

Miss Phylis Pearson

By whom sold, London, Christie's, 29 March 1968, lot 110, as Aelbert Cuyp, *Portrait of a Girl*

Where acquired by art dealer Edward Speelman (1910-1994), London

From whom presumably acquired by the family of the previous owner

**Literature:**

Unpublished

**The painting**

This remarkably charming little panel depicts a small boy in a grand outfit. This boy, who seems about eight to twelve years old and has long, curly ginger-blond hair, stands contrapposto against a dark wall, on a lighter floor. Lit from the left, he looks over his left shoulder with a hint of a smile on his face, his shadow falling behind him. With his right hand on hip, in his left hand he holds a kolf club, which rests on the floor in front of him, next to a kolf ball. The boy's clothing, a wintry outfit, is spectacular. His big fur and sheepskin hat matches the sheepskin that he wears over his shoulder, which is bound together on the chest with a green ribbon. Underneath it the boy wears a green cloak of a thinner fabric. Over his body he sports another sheepskin, worn like an apron, over a thick dark brown leather winter coat with folded sleeves, underneath which we see a grey doublet and the cuff of a white shirt. The dark diagonal that presses into the fur must be the strap of a bag, whose contours seem recognizable behind the boy's back. The boy wears a brown skirt with black embroidered decorations at the bottom, dark grey hose and black shoes with red laces.

Executed with inspiration and careful attention by a fine colourist, the painting directly engages the viewer, partly due to its innocent, carefree subject, but also to the painter's ability in the rendering of the materials, above all the sheepskin, which was done with an amazing feeling for texture. Painted with a creamy impasto, the individual tufts of ruffled wool are palpable; its colouration closely reflects the wool's natural variations from orange-red to pink, yellow and creamy white, and the rendition of the wavy fronds of wool on the edges of the sheepskin is admirable. As for the boy's face, it is rendered with the same spontaneity that gives the whole painting such an attractive appearance. Applied directly onto a clearly visible greyish underlayer which functions to provide the shadow between the fur hat and the boy's forehead, the incarnate, with little white highlights, is accurately and deftly done.

Kolf was a hugely popular game in the Netherlands in the early modern period.<sup>2</sup> Although certainly not restricted to the winter, kolf was often associated with that season, as is evident from the well-known seventeenth century imagery of kolf players on the ice. Various



portraits of children with kolf clubs survive, from the later sixteenth century onwards.<sup>3</sup> A constant element in these portraits is the children's fine clothing: they are always dressed meticulously, as exemplified in such a portrait by Jan van Ravesteyn (fig. 1). In contrast, our young boy is dressed in a more rustic (certainly winter-appropriate) fashion. The present portrait makes, in fact, such an informal impression, that one wonders whether it couldn't belong to another context, that breaches the more formal boundaries of commissioned commercial child portraiture.

#### The attribution

In 1968 the present painting, in auction at Christie's London, was catalogued as *Portrait of a Girl* by Aelbert Cuyp (1620-1691). Both the erroneous interpretation of the sitter's gender and the attribution missed the mark. While the Cuyp family's artistic repertoire does indeed include the genre of the children's portrait, the present portrait falls outside Aelbert's stylistic range, and that of his father, Jacob Cuyp (1594-1652), who painted many children's portraits. If Cuyp is not the painter, who is? To answer this question, we are helped by an unusual aide – the identity of the boy portrayed. He is without any doubt Moses ter Borch (1645-1667), son of the painter Gerard ter Borch the Elder (1582/83-1662) and his third wife Wiesken Matthijs (1607-1683). The youngest

member of an artistically gifted family, Moses was the half-brother of the famous painter Gerard ter Borch the Younger (1617-1681), and brother of Gesina ter Borch (1631-1690) and Harmen ter Borch (1638-1677), who were likewise artistically trained. From an early age, Moses, with his recognizable round face, his upturned nose and his curly ginger hair, was on various occasions depicted by his older siblings in drawings and paintings. Thus, he appears at age seven or eight in Gerard's *The Reading Lesson* of c. 1652/53, now in the Louvre (fig. 2).<sup>4</sup> We again find him in a little profile drawing from about a year later, when he is around nine years old (fig. 3).<sup>5</sup> A few years later, when he was about 14-16 years old in around 1660/61, we recognize him again in two brilliant self-portraits, one painted, the other drawn (figs. 4, 5).<sup>6</sup> A comparison with Moses' facial features as observed in these works unequivocally confirms his identity in the present painting.<sup>7</sup> Given Moses' estimated age of around 8-12 years old in our painting, and his year of birth 1645, our painting likely dates from c. 1653/57, chronologically in between the above-mentioned works by Gerard and Moses' self-portraits. Following the observation that our sitter is Moses ter Borch, we can safely locate the origins of our painting within the Ter Borch family ambit, which neatly explains the painting's noticeable informality. After an introduction to the Ter Borch family and its artistically active members, the painting's possible authors will be discussed.



Fig. 2 Gerard ter Borch Jr., *The Reading Lesson*, c. 1652, oil on panel, 27 x 25 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre



Fig. 3 Gerard ter Borch Jr., *Study of Moses ter Borch Laughing*, c. 1653/54, pen in brown over traces of black chalk, 6 x 6.5 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 1 Jan van Ravesteyn, *Portrait of a Boy with a Kolf Club*, 1626, oil on panel, 112 x 85 cm., sale London, Sotheby's, 4 December 2019, lot 24



Fig. 4 Moses ter Borch, *Self-Portrait*, 1660/61, oil on canvas, 26.5 x 18 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 5 Moses ter Borch, *Self-Portrait in a Cap Facing Frontwards*, 1660, black chalk, brush in black, corrections in white, 14.1 x 10 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

*Lesson* of c. 1652/53, now in the Louvre (fig. 2).<sup>4</sup> We again find him in a little profile drawing from about a year later, when he is around nine years old (fig. 3).<sup>5</sup> A few years later, when he was about 14-16 years old in around 1660/61, we recognize him again in two brilliant self-portraits, one painted, the other drawn (figs. 4, 5).<sup>6</sup> A comparison with Moses' facial features as observed in these works unequivocally confirms his identity in the present painting.<sup>7</sup> Given Moses' estimated age of around 8-12 years old in our painting, and his year of birth 1645, our painting likely dates from c. 1653/57, chronologically in between the above-mentioned works by Gerard and Moses' self-portraits. Following the observation that our sitter is Moses ter Borch, we can safely locate the origins of our painting within the Ter Borch family ambit, which neatly explains the painting's noticeable informality. After an introduction to the Ter Borch family and its artistically active members, the painting's possible authors will be discussed.

#### The Ter Borch family

The *pater familias* of the Ter Borch family was Gerard ter Borch the Elder.<sup>8</sup> Born in c. 1582/83 as the son of Harmen ter Borch (1550-1634), Zwolle's Licence Master (the collector of trade tax for the States General), Gerard Sr. was trained as an artist before travelling south at age 18 and spending many years in Italy (c. 1603/04-1611/12). Upon his return to Zwolle, Gerard settled as a painter, and in 1613 married Anna Bufkens (1587-1621). In 1617 she bore him a son, Gerard Jr. After Anna's death Gerard remarried Geesken van Voerst (1599-c. 1628), and decided to give up painting, instead assuming the Licence Mastership of Zwolle himself. The marriage produced two children, but by 1628 Geesken had died and Gerard Sr. got married for the third time, to Wiesken Matthijs. They had nine children, among them Gesina in 1631, Harmen in 1638 and Moses, the youngest sibling, born in June 1645. Although Gerard Sr. no longer practiced art professionally, he remained actively involved in instructing his children, an activity that can be followed with surprising precision thanks to the unique preservation of the Ter Borch studio estate, which comprises of over 1000 drawings by himself and his artistic children, often inscribed and dated by Gerard Sr. Kept at the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum, this studio estate offers an invaluable source for our insights into the artistic upbringing of the Ter Borch family.<sup>9</sup> By 1634 Gerard Jr. landed an apprenticeship with Pieter de Molijn (1595-1661) in Haarlem, where he was registered in the Guild of St Luke the following year. The next decade he travelled extensively, to England, Italy, Spain, France and the Southern Netherlands, while residing in Amsterdam in between journeys. After a period in Munster



Fig. 6 Gerard ter Borch Jr., *Gallant Conversation, Known as 'The Paternal Admonition'*, c. 1654, oil on canvas, 71 x 73 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

1645/48, Ter Borch probably settled in Amsterdam again, but seems to have often touched base in Zwolle, as we recognize his younger siblings in his artistic output, which consisted mainly of small-scale portraiture, guardroom scenes, and domestic and fashionable genre (fig. 6), in which he reached an astonishing mastery of composition, the rendering of materials and psychological depth.<sup>10</sup> In 1654 Gerard Jr. married and settled permanently in close by Deventer.

While Gerard Jr. was the only sibling to make art his life profession, we can follow his siblings' developments from an early age onwards. Although Gesina, being a girl, was largely excluded from the more academic home education of Gerard Sr., she did benefit from her brothers' lessons and the materials available in the studio. In 1646, at around 14 years old, she started her so-called 'Materi-Boeck', a practice book for calligraphy, to which she kept adding poems and drawings. In it we find a drawing of a child playing a violin (fig. 7) likely depicting Moses aged four, that she probably executed in 1650, as an identical drawing by



Fig. 7 Gesina ter Borch after Harmen ter Borch, *Child Playing a Violin (Moses?)*, c. 1650, ink and watercolour, 15.5 x 21.1 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Harmen is inscribed 'Har[men].t.Borch. naet leve' ('Harmen ter Borch, drawn after life') and dated 13 January 1650 by Gerard Sr.<sup>11</sup> Gesina thus copied after her younger brother, and worked alongside him. In time she managed to produce an impressive body of her own drawings, varying from figure and costume studies, elegant companies, indoor scenes and exteriors, and executed either in pencil, pen and ink, chalk and finished watercolours, many of which are found in her Poetry Album, which she started in 1652, at age 21. Her most ambitious album, het 'Konstboek' (Art book, or Scrapbook), was begun in 1660. She filled it with her many watercolours, but also mounted earlier works on its pages, by herself and by her father and siblings. Her last dated drawing in this Scrapbook dates from 1680. Although barely any paintings by Gesina survive, there are clear indications that she painted, a notion to which we will return below. The family-minded Gesina remained unmarried, and lived her whole life in the family house on the Sassenstraat.

The period of Gesina's artistic coming-of-age, the early 1650s, was simultaneously the period in which Harmen's interest in drawing dwindled. Harmen's earliest surviving drawings date from 1647, when he was eight years old. Harmen was prolific – well over 200 drawings from the studio estate have been attributed to him. His extant oeuvre



Fig. 8 Moses ter Borch, *Young Seaman Standing*, c. 1661/65, red chalk, 30.2 x 19.2 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

exists mainly of drawings in pen, red and black chalk, depicting daily life – sitting or standing figures, often carrying baskets, children playing, carriages, etc. – sometimes copied after his father and brother, but often his own inventions, observed from life. Although promising, Harmen's production dropped almost completely at the beginning of 1653, due to his fading interest. A few paintings by his hand exist, but they show no affinity with the present work.<sup>12</sup> In 1661 he took over the Licence Mastership of Zwolle from his father, who died the next year.

Encouraged by his elder siblings, the youngest sibling Moses produced his earliest drawings at age seven, in March 1653. From his output we learn that he was an avid copyist of prints – by and after artists as diverse as Rembrandt, Callot, Nolpe, Testa, Annibale Carracci and Rubens – no doubt so instructed by his father, who also encouraged him to draw after sculpture. These latter drawings demonstrate that Moses developed a keen feeling for volume and chiaroscuro. This aspect of his art is likewise manifest in the amazing series of drawn self-portraits that Moses undertook around 1660/61, at around 15 to 16 years old (fig. 5), and the two painted self-portraits from the same period (fig. 4).<sup>13</sup> A series of red chalk drawings of adolescents in military or nautical dress dates from the early to mid 1660s, characterized again by their feeling for volume,



Fig. 9 Gerard ter Borch Jr. and Gesina ter Borch, *Memorial Portrait of Moses ter Borch*, 1667/69, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 56.5 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

and their psychological introspection (fig. 8).<sup>14</sup> Despite his considerable talent, Moses set aside his painting career, and joined the Dutch Fleet to fight in the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-1667). On 12 July 1667 Moses died at Harwich during a minor defeat by the English. He was grievously mourned, most of all by his sister Gesina, in poems and drawings, and commemorated in a special portrait, painted by Gerard Jr. and Gesina together (fig. 9).<sup>15</sup>

#### The attribution again

Acknowledging the Ter Borch family studio c. 1653/57 to be the point source for our *Portrait of Moses* consequentially narrows down the attribution options to five potentially plausible painters: Gerard Sr., Gerard Jr., Gesina, Harmen, and Moses himself. At least two of these seem less likely to have been involved. Gerard Sr. had given up painting decades ago. His role was in the background, a monitoring teacher. Nothing points to his artistic activity during these years. Moreover, our painting appears to be the result of ardent talent, rather than the product of a retired mentor. Harmen likewise doesn't seem to be a feasible candidate. As said, his enthusiasm for drawing abated around 1653, but possibly more telling is his output, which shows little connection to the present portrait, except for a certain thematic affinity, as some drawings depict children at play.<sup>16</sup>



Fig. 10 Gerard ter Borch Jr., *Shepherdess*, c. 1650/53, oil on canvas, 66 x 50 cm., Anholt, Museum Wasserburg Anholt

Of the remaining three siblings, Gerard Jr. was the only professional painter. Yet even while acknowledging the portrait's informality, it seems improbable that he would operate on his own on such a light-hearted note, while executing during the same period such highly finished, extremely refined paintings. Still, given the family structure and his leading role in it, he was in all probability involved in the present work's creation, as its 'auctor intellectualis', or coordinator. To begin with, Moses' contrapposto pose clearly derives from similar figures in Gerard Jr.'s oeuvre, such as his *Shepherdess* in Anholt, of c. 1650/53 (fig. 10), which served as templates. The parallel with the somewhat earlier *Portrait of Helena van der Schalcke* further underlines Gerard's personal involvement (fig. 11).<sup>17</sup> Gerard painted this small portrait in Haarlem in the late 1640s, where the girl (born in September 1646) and her family lived, and it would therefore not have been known to Gesina or Moses as an example. While more placid in execution, its general setting (the neutral, dark background and light floor, the colour scheme, the lighting and shadow) is rather similar to our work in conception. In Gerard's depiction of the face (fig. 12), we observe his technique of using the darker priming layer for the parts in shadow, while working up the lighter parts of the incarnate with sharply applied pink tones (see the effect around the eyes and on the cheeks), a technique likewise



Fig. 11  
Gerard ter Borch Jr., *Portrait of Helena van der Schalcke*, c. 1648/50, oil on panel, 34 x 28.5 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 12 Detail of fig. 11

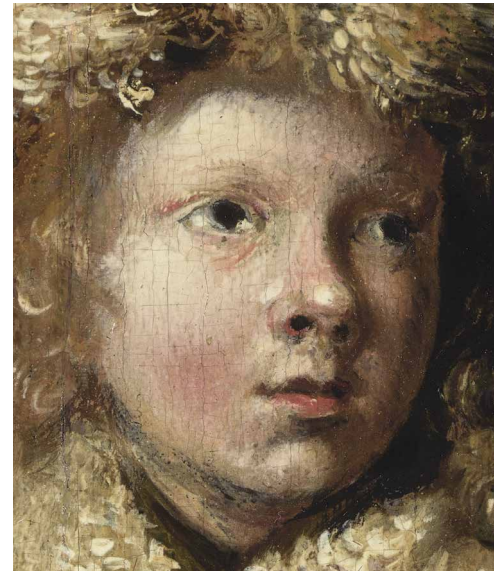


Fig. 13 Detail of cat. no. 2



Fig. 14 Gerard ter Borch Jr., *Portrait of Caspar van Kinschot* (1622-1649), c. 1646/47, oil on copper, 8 x 11 cm., The Hague, Mauritshuis

encountered in other portraits, such as the very small *Portrait of Caspar van Kinschot* (1622-1649) of c. 1646/47 (fig. 14).<sup>18</sup> Viewed alongside our painting (fig. 13), we recognize a similar approach – note the contrast between the pink application on the forehead and the priming, suggesting shadow underneath the fur hat – but with a distinctly looser execution in our work. Since we do not find strong parallels for the spectacular rendering of the sheepskin in Gerard Jr.'s oeuvre – the hide of the cow in the 1653/54 *Cow Shed* in Los Angeles, for instance, shows no affinity at all<sup>19</sup> – it is not unthinkable that he was not, in the end, responsible for its execution.

As the Ter Borch family was tight knit, it takes some effort to assess the individual parts played in our work. While the contrapposto pose ultimately relies on works by Gerard Jr., the drawings of Gesina and Moses reveal that they adopted similar poses, inspired by their brother, in their own work. Moses' sensitive drawings in red chalk may serve as

examples. In addition to the Rijksmuseum sheet (fig. 8), a drawing in Baltimore, in particular, recycles the pose encountered in our painting (fig. 15).<sup>20</sup> However, these drawings were executed in 1660 and later. Before that, when Moses was still very young, his output does not relate clearly to the present imagery. Although the possibility cannot be excluded that Moses had a hand in his own portrait, his very young age, the lack of corresponding material during the right time frame, and his more academic instruction by his father and brother, which together logically lead to his first paintings being made around 1660, seem to imply that he did not.

It is, in fact, in Gesina's work of the 1650s and early 1660s that we encounter several engaging parallels. The pose of a *Fisherman* on a sheet dated c. 1654, for instance, shows a remarkable overlap with Moses' pose in our painting (fig. 16).<sup>21</sup> In the same vein, some of the frivolous figures in watercolour, found in Gesina's *Poetry Album* and



Fig. 15  
Moses ter Borch, *Standing Figure of a Boy*, 1660, red chalk, 20.3 x 8.3 cm., Baltimore, Baltimore Museum of Art



Fig. 16  
Gesina ter Borch, *Fisherman Standing with his Hands in his Pocket*, c. 1654, pencil, red and black chalk, 14.7 x 6.8 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet



Fig. 17  
Gesina ter Borch, *Gentleman Walking by a River*, c. 1661, brush in black in various colours, 16.5 x 23.3 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, detail of the gentleman



Fig. 18  
Gesina ter Borch, *Gentleman Standing with his Arms Akimbo*, 1660s, red chalk over traces of black chalk, 19.1 x 12.2 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

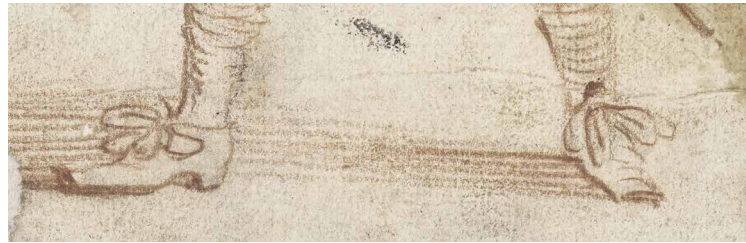


Fig. 19 Detail of fig. 18, shoes, in reverse



Fig. 20 Detail of cat. no. 2, shoes and skirt



Fig. 21  
Detail of fig. 6, shoes

her Scrapbook, are clearly reminiscent of Moses in their pose (fig. 17).<sup>22</sup> Noteworthy here, too, are the gentleman's feet, their position, the shoes he wears, and specifically Gesina's almost cartoon-like rendering of them. We come across similar shoes time and time again in her watercolours. A larger drawing by Gesina in red chalk, of a standing man with hands on hips, shows exactly the same formal pose (fig. 18). Seen in reverse (fig. 19), these shoes are near-identical to the rendering of the shoes in our painting (fig. 20) and a far cry from the very same type of shoes, as depicted by Gerard jr. (fig. 21). What's more, the ostentatious emphasis on the fancy laces seems typical of Gesina's style, just as the graphic quality of the embroidered decorations with bows and curls on Moses' skirt (fig. 20) perfectly fits the profile of Gesina, who was clearly the sibling most inclined towards that sort of artistic expression. One recognizes several capitals 'S' (also in reverse), that are rather similar to Gesina's graceful S's, as observed in the drawing of the child with a violin (fig. 7). Although seemingly indecipherable, the scrolling pattern to the left of the skirt conspicuously resembles Gesina's ingenious monogram GTB surmounted by a crown, as found in her drawing from c. 1660 (fig. 22). Would this imply that our painting is signed with Gesina's monogram? That seems difficult to substantiate, but the direct connection with her artistic persona is surely there.



Fig. 22 Gesina ter Borch, *Crowned Monogram GTB*, c. 1660, pen in brown over traces of black chalk, 16.5 x 19 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

How should this all be understood? Here we necessarily remain aloof. Possibly, our painting was done c. 1655, when Gerard Jr. had married and lived closer than previously. During a visit – either from Gerard to Zwolle, or from Gerard's siblings to his house and studio in Deventer – the idea came up to create a painting of Moses in an outrageous outfit. Under the guidance of Gerard, the work would have been set up, after which Gesina actively participated in the painting process, instructed and guided by Gerard, as Moses modelled. Of course, this is conjecture, a hypothetical scenario. We do know, however, that Gesina was instructed in the art of painting. A laudatory poem by an admirer, dated Zwolle, 27 February 1659, is titled 'On the painting [efforts] of the nice and witty Miss Gesijna ter Borch', and continues as follows: 'Here shines GESIJNAAS spirit, since Nature's grace / Gave to her the brush and charcoal, yes proper art of painting / At her brother's and father's lessons.'<sup>23</sup> In addition, several works by Gesina are mentioned in documents, and we have the *Memorial portrait of Moses* that she executed in collaboration with Gerard Jr. after Moses's untimely death. This impressive, if mournful portrait exudes a wholly different ambition from the present work, which fascinates us because of its informality, its direct spontaneity, its heartwarming qualities, and the exciting context of the extraordinary Ter Borch family studio, in which it was created.

If, finally, the portrait might allude to something more than just Moses in a fabulous outfit, remains open for discussion. While reserving judgement, one might think that the painting could be a whimsical nod to the well-known allegories of Winter, commonly represented by elderly men with walking sticks in furry outfits (often showing winter games played on the ice in the background.) (fig. 23). The playful inversion of replacing such a greybeard for a young boy with a kolf club, imagery normally restricted to formal child portraiture, would have added yet another layer to the attraction of the work.<sup>24</sup>

JH



Fig. 23 Jacob Matham, *Personification of Winter (Hyems)*, c. 1588/1602, engraving, 16.7 x 10.8 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

#### Notes

- 1 From the moment of its creation, our painting presumably remained in the possession of the Ter Borch family, in casu Gesina Ter Borch. In her will of 1690 Gesina states: 'En zullen al mijn conterfeitsels, en van broeder Moses en van vader en moeder [...] voor de kinderen bewaart moeten worden.' ('And all my portraits and [those] of brother Moses and of father and mother will be secured for the children.'). See M.E. Houck, *Mededeelingen betreffende Gerhard ter Borch, Robert van Voerst, Pieter van Anraedt, Aleijda Wolfsen, Derck Hardensteijn en Henrick ter Bruggen benevens aantekeningen omtrent hunne familieleden (Verslagen en Mededeelingen der Vereeniging tot Beoefening van Overijsselsch Regt en Geschiedenis 2)*, Zwolle 1899, p. 156. If the present work was, at that time, among these portraits mentioned by Gesina cannot be substantiated.
- 2 See A. Willemsen, 'Speelgoed in beeld : De speelcultuur in de Nederlanden rond 1600', in: J.B. Bedaux, R.E.O. Ekkart, *Kindereen op hun mooist : Het kinderportret in de Nederlanden 1500-1700*, exh. cat. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum, Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten 2000-2001, pp. 61-72, p. 66.
- 3 See R.E.O. Ekkart, in: Haarlem/Antwerp 2000-2001, pp. 125-126, cat. no. 17.
- 4 S.J. Gudlaugsson, *Geraert Ter Borch*, 2 vols., The Hague 1959-1960, 2, pp. 108-109, cat. no. 98; M.E. Wieseman, in: A.K. Wheelock Jr. et al., *Gerard ter Borch*, exh. cat. Washington, National Gallery of Art, Detroit, Detroit Institute of Art 2004-2005, pp. 87-89, cat. no. 18.
- 5 A.M. Kettering, *Drawings from the Ter Borch studio estate (Catalogue of the Dutch and Flemish Drawings in the Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam V)*, 2 vols., The Hague 1988, 1, pp. 142-143, cat. no. GJr 81.
- 6 For the drawing, see Kettering 1988, 1, pp. 314-315, cat. no. M 52.
- 7 I am thankful to Arthur Wheelock, Jr., author of the Washington/Detroit 2004-2005 exhibition catalogue on Ter Borch, Professor Emeritus Eric Jan Sluijter and Dr. Nicolette Sluijter-Seiffert, for the fruitful discussions on the present work. Wheelock (from photographs), Sluijter and Sluijter-Seiffert (first-hand inspection) agree that the sitter of our portrait is Moses ter Borch.
- 8 For further biographical information and artistic analysis, see Kettering 1988, 1, pp. XXIX-XXXIII ('General introduction'), and the entries on individual family members: 1, pp. 4-8 (Gerard Sr.); 1, pp. 86-91 (Gerard Jr.); 1, pp. 194-196 (Harmen); pp. 286-288 (Moses); 2, pp. 362-364 (Gesina). See also A. McNeil Kettering, in J. Turner (ed.), *The Dictionary of Art*, 34 vols, New York 1996, 4, pp. 379-384.
- 9 See Kettering 1988.
- 10 For Gerard Jr.'s artistic development, see A.K. Wheelock, Jr., 'The Artistic Development of Gerard ter Borch', in: Washington/Detroit 2004-2005, pp. 1-17. For the painting, see Gudlaugsson 1959-1960, cat. no. 110-I; A.M. Kettering, in: Washington/Detroit 2004-2005, pp. 114-115, cat. no. 27.
- 11 For Harmen's drawing, see Kettering 1988, 1, pp. 226-227, cat. no. H 68; for Gesina's drawing, see idem, 2, p. 408, fol. 17 Recto.
- 12 See Gudlaugsson 1959-1960, 2, pp. 287-288.
- 13 For the other self-portrait, see Kettering 1988, 1, p. 350, M 130.
- 14 Kettering 1988, 2, pp. 340-341, M 105.
- 15 See A.M. Kettering, 'Het Portret van Moses ter Borch door Gerard en Gesina ter Borch', in: *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 43/4 (1995), pp. 317-335.
- 16 See, for example, Kettering 1988, 1, cat. nos. H 10, H 44, H 75, H 113, H 114, H 122, H 124.
- 17 For the portrait of Helena van der Schalcke, see Gudlaugsson 1959-1960, cat. no. 30; M.E. Wieseman, in: Washington/Detroit 2004-2005, pp. 75-77, cat. no. 14.
- 18 See Gudlaugsson 1959-1960, 2, p. 79, cat. no. 51; A.K. Kettering, in: Washington/Detroit 2004-2005, pp. 68-69, cat. no. 11.
- 19 Oil on panel, 47.5 x 50.2 cm., Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, inv. 83.PB.232. See A.K. Wheelock, Jr., in: Washington/Detroit 2004-2005, pp. 108-111, cat. no. 25.
- 20 Kettering 1988, 2, pp. 840-41, cat. no. 50 (Appendix 1 : Ter Borch drawings outside the Rijksprentenkabinet).

- 21 Kettering 1988, 2, pp. 374-375, cat. no. Gs 18.
- 22 Kettering 1988, 2, pp. 630, 696, folio 34. *Recto* (Scrapbook, Gesina).
- 23 'Op de Schilder-kunst van de aardige en geestrijke Juffrou Mejuffr. GESIJNA ter Borch / Hier straalt GESIJNAAS geest, nadien natuuraas gunst / Haar gaf 't pinceel en kool, ja juiste schilder-kunst / Op broers en vaders les.[...] In Zwol, den 27 februarij 1659'. The poem, included in Gesina's Poetry book, is by an admirer of Gesina, H. Fisscher. See Kettering 1988, 2, pp. 469-470, 595, Folio 99. *Recto*. As Gerard Jr. was the active painter, he will likely have been Gesina's instructor.
- 24 Alternatively, one could think of a more Arcadian dimension, in analogy with the depiction of Gesina as a shepherd in the painting in Anholt (our fig. 10). I thank Dr. Eddy Schavemaker for kindly providing this interesting suggestion.



Detail of cat. no. 2

**Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder**

Antwerp 1573 – 1621 The Hague

*A Still Life of Flowers in a Bottle of Green Glass*

Signed with monogram, lower left: AB (B through A)

Oil on copper

22.8 x 17.3 cm.

**Provenance:**

Amsterdam, Kunsthandel P. de Boer, 1934

Amsterdam, collection Dr. Hendrik L. Straat (1890-1976), in or after 1934-1960

Sale Amsterdam, Paul Brandt, 24 May 1960, lot 9 (colour illustration)

Switzerland, private collection, until 2021

**Literature:**

P. de Boer, G. Glück, L. Burchard, *De helsche en de fluweelen Brueghel en hun invloed op de kunst in de Nederlanden : N.a.v. de tentoonstelling in de N.V. Kunsthandel P. de Boer*, exh. cat. Amsterdam, Kunsthandel P. de Boer 1934, p. 57, cat. no. 248, pl. 36

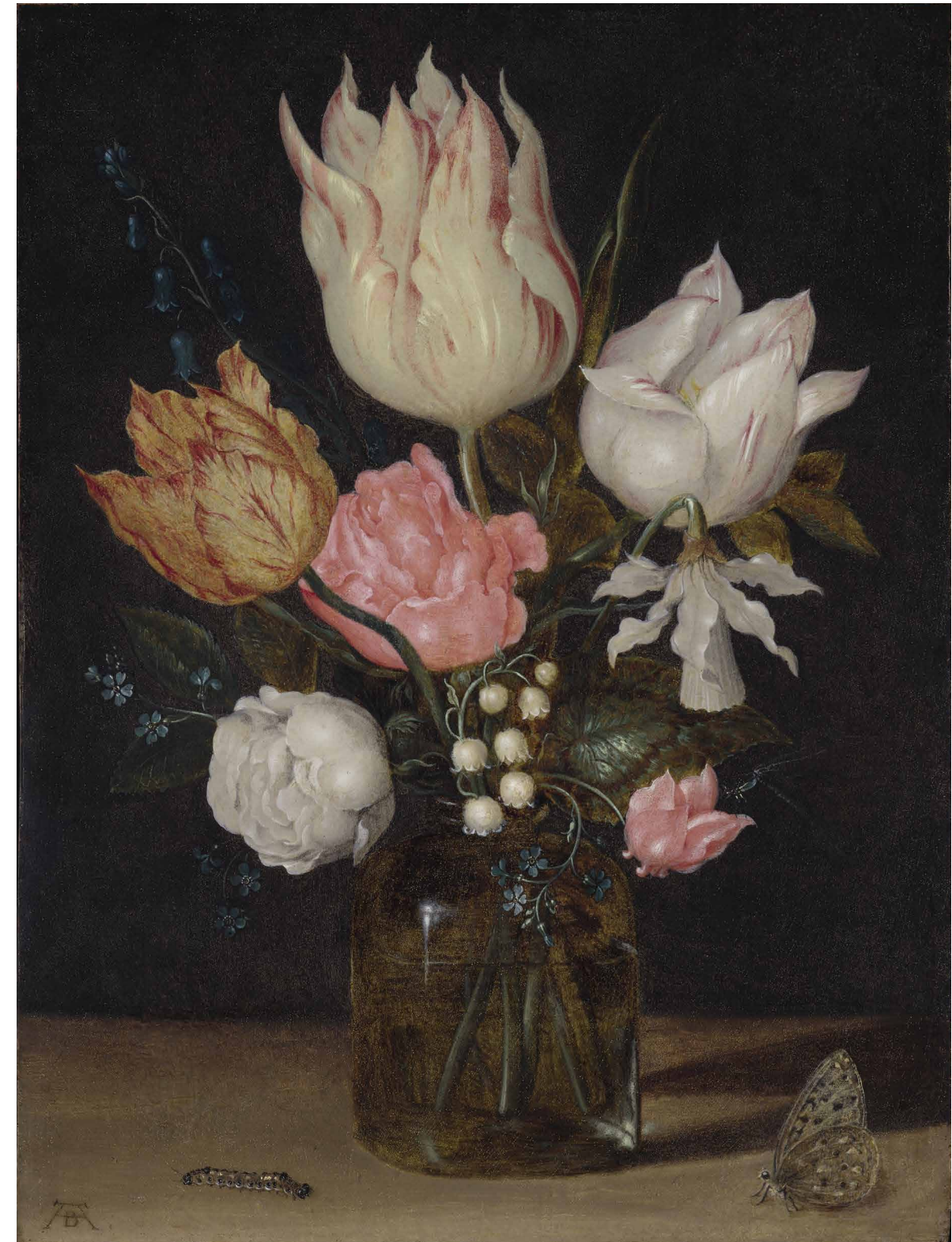
N.N., *Collectie H.L. Straat : chirurg te Leeuwarden*, exh. cat. Arnhem, Gemeentemuseum Arnhem, Schiedam, Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, Leeuwarden, Fries Museum 1959-1960, cat. no. 1

L.J. Bol, *The Bosschaert Dynasty : Painters of Flowers and Fruit*, Leigh-on-Sea 1960, p. 64, cat. no. 28, plate 18b

**Exhibited:**

Amsterdam, Kunsthandel P. de Boer, *De helsche en de fluweelen Brueghel en hun invloed op de kunst in de Nederlanden*, February-March 1934, cat. no. 248

Arnhem, Gemeentemuseum Arnhem, Schiedam, Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, Leeuwarden, Fries Museum, *Collectie H.L. Straat : chirurg te Leeuwarden*, 1959-1960, cat. no. 1



This little bouquet of flowers in a bottle is a recent rediscovery in the most literal sense. It was exhibited in 1934 and 1959, and included in Laurens Bol's ground-breaking monograph on Ambrosius Bosschaert and his school from 1960; but by the time Bosschaert's still life first appeared in 1934, it had been overpainted quite substantially, impeding full appreciation of his original brushwork.<sup>1</sup> Recent cleaning and further treatment has revived it to no small degree.

This modest bouquet includes white and red roses, three different types of tulips, a white narcissus (*Narcissus tortuosis*), hyacinth, forget-me-not, lily-of-the-valley, and a cyclamen. To the left, on the table, crawls a caterpillar; to the right, a butterfly has alighted, and on the cyclamen flower rests a damselfly.

The painter, Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder, was born in Antwerp, the son of another Ambrosius Bosschaert, a painter whose work appears to be unrecorded. For religious reasons Bosschaert's father moved with his family to Middelburg in around 1587. From 1593 to 1613, the son Ambrosius – the author of the present still life of flowers – was a member, and sometimes dean, of the local Guild of St. Luke, where he was recorded both as a painter and as an art dealer. He married the elder sister of Balthasar

van der Ast (1593-1652), who would become his foster son and pupil, and a highly successful still-life painter. By the end of 1614, Bosschaert had left Middelburg with his family. Subsequently, he was briefly recorded in Amsterdam, then in Bergen-op-Zoom (1615), in Utrecht (1615-19), and in Breda (1619-21). He died in The Hague, when delivering a painting he had executed for Prince Maurits' butler. Bosschaert was a pioneer in flower painting, a genre he seems to have taken up rather late in life, after c. 1600. Bosschaert depicted a modest variety of floral species and, like most of his contemporaries, grouped them together regardless of season. He often painted on copper, which gives these works a glossy texture reminiscent of enamels. Dated works by Ambrosius Bosschaert are known from 1605 until 1621, the year of his death, but several of his known undated flower paintings were doubtlessly executed prior to 1605. Bosschaert spent much of his working life in Middelburg, where floriculture was enthusiastically pursued, and where exotic, rare plants were collected and studied. Bosschaert had a following there, but more so in Utrecht, where his sons, Ambrosius the Younger, Abraham, and his brother-in-law, Balthasar van der Ast, continued to be active. His eldest surviving son, Johannes, worked in Haarlem and Dordrecht where he exerted considerable influence, even though he died very young. Generally, Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder's

influence on flower and fruit still-life painting can be observed distinctly until the middle of the seventeenth century.

This floral composition is known in three versions. Apart from the one presented here, there is a second one, certainly painted by Bosschaert himself, that was auctioned in New York in 2011 (fig. 1). There are slight differences in detail from the present painting, for instance in the hyacinth, the modelling of the tulip at upper right, the curve of the sprig of forget-me-not in the front, and, most conspicuously, the yellow hue of the tulip at the top. Generally, the handling of that painting is slightly less smooth. The third version, in the collection of the Rijksmuseum Twenthe in Enschede (The Netherlands), is also catalogued as by Bosschaert himself (fig. 2). That painting, too, shows some differences in details, but also in quality. The central pink rose, the tulip at the top and the white narcissus, for instance, appear to be less subtly painted. However, the state of preservation is far from ideal in that painting, which makes it difficult to judge. In any case, it does appear to be a period work, most likely produced in Bosschaert's studio, whether or not by or with the aid of the artist himself.<sup>2</sup> The version sold in 2011 is not signed, and at present no signature can be found on the one in Enschede, although it is recorded as bearing traces of a Bosschaert monogram. In the course of the recent treatment the monogram on the present still life, Bosschaert's characteristic AB monogram, turned out to be fully authentic, so this is the only version of the three that is reliably signed. Also, infrared examination revealed the presence of characteristic under-drawing in many places in the composition (figs. 3, 4). Thus, we may well assume that, of the known versions, this painting is the prime one.

Without being more specific, Laurens Bol assigned this painting to Bosschaert's years in Middelburg, that is, before 1615. Comparison with other examples of Bosschaert's flower paintings places its origin more specifically some time before 1610, possibly in 1609. Over the years, Ambrosius Bosschaert rather consistently dated part of his oeuvre, which allows us to follow the development of his work quite closely, from his earliest known dated bouquet from 1605 (fig. 5) up until work from the last year of his life, 1621 (fig. 6). An important change occurred in Bosschaert's oeuvre after he had seen work by Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568-1625), which must have been in about 1607. What he saw and studied was probably a flower painting now in the Städelsches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt am Main (fig. 7). As a result, Bosschaert's arrangements did not only become more three-dimensional in 1607, but he also 'borrowed' several flowers from Brueghel's bouquet for his own work. Like most painters of flower still lifes, Bosschaert composed his bouquets with the aid of studies he had prepared of individual flowers, and occasionally he also employed



Fig. 1  
Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder, oil on copper, 19 x 14.5 cm, Art market, 2011

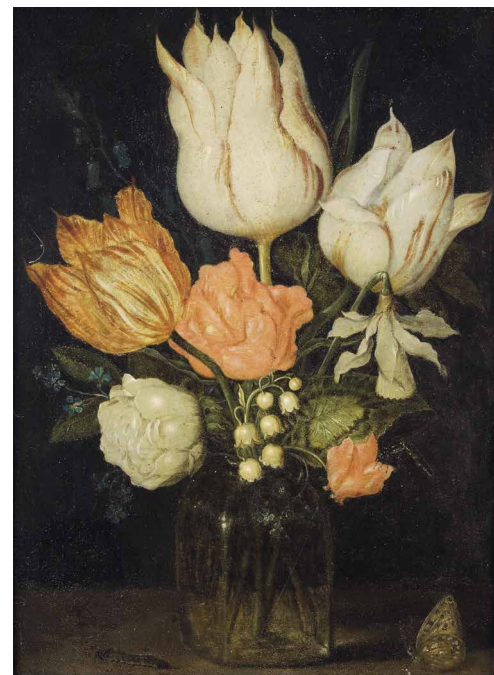


Fig. 2  
Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder (?), oil on copper, 20 x 14 cm., Enschede, Rijksmuseum Twenthe



Figs. 3, 4  
Details of cat. no. 3 in infrared and normal light, showing the under-drawing





Fig. 5 Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder, signed with monogram and dated 1605., art market, 1999



Fig. 6 Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder, signed with monogram and dated 1621, art market, 2014



Fig. 7 Jan Brueghel the Elder, oil on copper, 22.6 x 18.2 cm., Frankfurt am Main, Städelches Kunstinstitut



Fig. 8 Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder, oil on copper, 30.2 x 20.2 cm., art market, 2000



Fig. 9 Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder, signed with monogram and dated 1610, oil on copper, 26 x 18.1 cm., private collection



Fig. 10 Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder, signed with monogram and dated 160. (1608?), oil on copper 21 x 17.2 cm., art market, 2014

models he found in the work of others. He reused several such models a number of times in various paintings. The white narcissus in the painting presented here is one of the flowers Bosschaert took from Brueghel's painting.<sup>3</sup> It also appears in a flower painting from about 1608, which also includes several other flowers borrowed from Brueghel's example (fig. 8). That painting also features the same tulip seen at top right in the present bouquet, and it reappears in another bouquet, signed and dated by Bosschaert in 1610 (fig. 9). This specific tulip had made its first appearance in a vase of flowers from 1607.<sup>4</sup> Somewhat hidden under a butterfly, the bouquet in figure 9 also includes the same white rose as in the present bouquet. This white rose, too, is a recurrent motif in Bosschaert's flower pieces from the years before 1610. It also appears in a bouquet on which the date now reads as 1606, but which more likely was painted in 1608 or, perhaps, 1609 (fig. 10). The yellow tulip with red veining in that bouquet is the same as the one placed at upper left in the present flower painting, while the pink rose in the centre is clearly based upon the same model as the one in the centre here.<sup>5</sup>

The fact that these recurrences of the same flowers can all be found in bouquets by Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder from c. 1608 to 1610 also places the date of origin of the painting presented here in that year range, with 1609 as perhaps the most plausible date.

It is unlikely that Ambrosius Bosschaert intended to convey a deep moral message with this modest flower painting, but the fact that flowers wither and die quickly, just as all life on earth is temporal, is a commonly accepted warning attached to such paintings. The fact that Bosschaert placed a caterpillar and a butterfly next to his vase may well be explained as a reference to the cycle of life, and to the resurrection: out of the caterpillar springs the butterfly, as Christ rose from the grave. As common as they seem to us today, tulips, around 1610, were still exquisite novelties. Most of all, Bosschaert's intention would probably have been to present his viewers with an exciting as well as pretty, meticulously rendered image of a group of wonderful flowers to enjoy and admire, also during those months when no real flowers were available.

FGM

#### Notes

- 1 A detailed conservation report by Redivivus studio (March 2022) is available. The varnish on the painting had yellowed considerably, and in or before 1934, as well as at a later date, several flowers had been retouched or repainted substantially. Meticulous cleaning revealed that most of the painting was in good original condition, only the yellow-and-red tulip at upper left had to be reconstructed, as well as the butterfly at lower right.
- 2 The bottle in the painting in Enschede appears to be square, but this may be a matter of incorrect retouching or, in case the painting is actually a copy, misinterpretation by the copyist. Neither of the two other versions appears to have been known to Laurens Bol when he published his Bosschaert monograph in 1960.
- 3 Bol, in his 1960 monograph (p. 64), mentioned that the white narcissus in this painting also appeared in his catalogue number 21 (p. 62 and plate 14), which he attributed to Bosschaert 'with some reserve because of the less detailed style of painting'. That painting, in fact, is a free copy after Brueghel's painting in Frankfurt and the attribution to Bosschaert is indeed uncertain. A variant of this copy, probably of a somewhat later date, may have been painted by Balthasar van der Ast, as a relatively early work (see the online database RKDimages, record no. 19872). Whether or not these copies stem from Bosschaert's circle, the fact that Bosschaert liberally borrowed flowers from Brueghel's bouquet shows that he must have known the painting intimately.
- 4 The latter, oil on copper, 25 x 19 cm, signed with monogram and dated 1607, with John Mitchell & Son, London, c. 1993 (see RKDimages record no. 122766).
- 5 A close variant of that bouquet, oil on copper 23 x 18 cm, signed with monogram at lower right, was with Johnny van Haeften, London, in around 1996 (see RKDimages, record no. 122824).

**Pieter Claesz**

Berchem 1597/98 – 1660 Haarlem

*Still life with a Roemer, a Plate of Olives, a Knife, Nuts, Bread and a Knife atop a Table*

Signed with monogram and dated lower left: PC 1642

oil on panel

34.6 x 47.3 cm.

**Provenance:**

Amsterdam, Kunsthandel P. de Boer, 1960

Kettwig (Essen), collection Dr. Karl Girardet, 1970

Amsterdam, Kunsthandel Charles Roelofs, 1984

Sale London, Christie's, 12 December 1986, lot 25

Amsterdam, Douwes Fine Art, 1987 and 1988

Switzerland, private collection until 2021

**Literature:**

N.N., *Catalogue of old pictures : Collection 1960 : Kunsthandel P. de Boer*, exh. cat. Amsterdam 1960, cat. no. 37

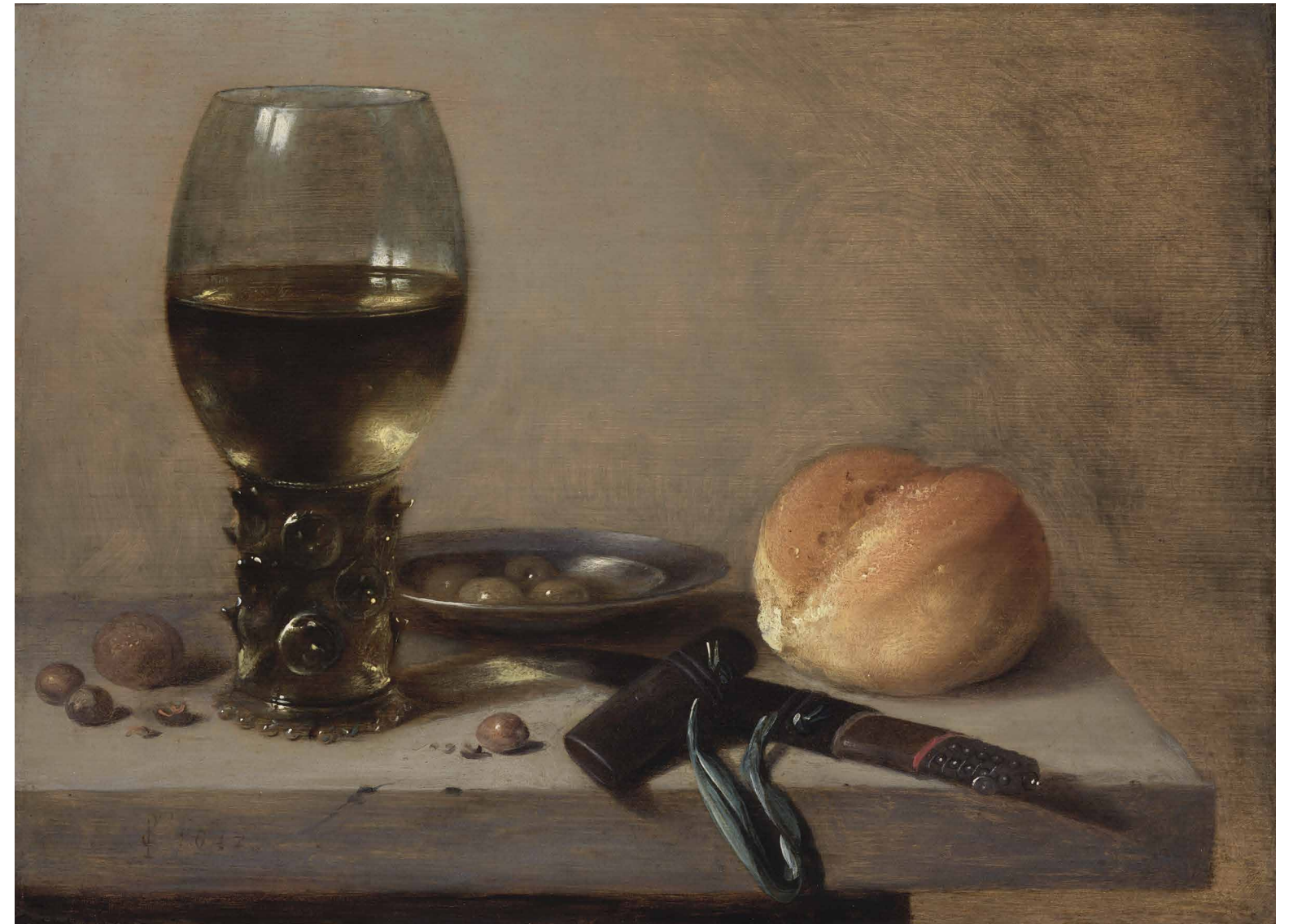
H. Vey, *Sammlung Herbert Girardet: holländische und flämische Meister*, exh. cat. Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans-Van Beuningen 1970, p. 16, cat. no. 14, ill.

M. Brunner-Bulst *Pieter Claesz : der Hauptmeister des Haarlemer Stillebens im 17. Jahrhundert : Kritischer Œuvrekatalog*, Lingen 2004, pp. 269-270, cat. no. 114, ill.

**Exhibited:**

Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, 1970

Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans-Van Beuningen, 1970



In the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Pieter Claesz was Haarlem's most renowned still life painter.<sup>1</sup> He was born in Berchem, near Antwerp around 1597.<sup>2</sup> Little is known of his early years and artistic training. There is however a clear influence in his early works of Antwerp masters Osias Beert the Elder (1580-1624) and Clara Peeters (1589-circa 1657). In 1620, a Pieter Clasens was mentioned as a master painter in the membership roll of the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke.<sup>3</sup> Roughly a year later, he moved from the Southern Netherlands to the prosperous Haarlem. It was in Haarlem where his son Nicolaes Berchem was born in 1622, who would go on to become famous for his Italianate landscapes.<sup>4</sup> This painting places Claesz in Haarlem in 1621, the year of his earliest known still lifes. This early work features fruit and a stoneware jug,<sup>5</sup> revealing his stylistic Antwerpian roots as well as the influence of the elder Haarlem still life painter, Floris van Dijck (1575-1651). During the following period, he matured and developed his skills as a specialist still life painter of food, tobacco and *vanitas* themes. Claesz limited his range of objects and colours to develop his own style of still life: the *monochrome banketje*. He masterfully rendered materials such as silver and gold, pewter, ceramic, glass and various different foods, which he illuminated with an invisible source of bright light. Inventories of 17<sup>th</sup> century Haarlem collections reveal Pieter Claesz as the most well represented still life painter in the city.<sup>6</sup> His fellow citizen Willem Claesz Heda (1594-1680) followed his example and began to paint still lifes in 1628. Into the early 1630s, the two artists competed closely as successful still life painters. After a long career spanning forty years, Pieter Claesz died in 1660 at 63, leaving an oeuvre of roughly 260 still lifes.<sup>7</sup>

In *Still life with a Roemer, a Plate of Olives, a Knife, Nuts, Bread and a Knife atop a Table*, Pieter Claesz paints a simple meal on the right end of a stone table. Bright light flows in from the upper left and rests upon the objects. The eye goes immediately to the big *roemer* filled with white wine, the crunchy bread roll on the right side of the table, illuminated by the warm mid-day light. Between the *roemer* and the bread roll is a pewter plate of olives and a knife unsheathed, these elements dominating the composition. The reflection of the window on the glass, which offers an illusion of spatial dimension, is a typical feature of the artist's work. This table knife with a sheath attached by a blue ribbon is one of the artist's favourite motifs and can be seen in several of his paintings of the 1640s. It lies diagonally across the table, projecting out from the table's edge to the centre of the composition. The knife cutting across the table creates a *trompe l'oeil* which compellingly invites the viewer to take part in this intimate meal. The knife guides the eye back

to the centre, where the top of its blade reflects the light cast by the *roemer* onto the table. A particular compositional accent in this still life is given to the triangle created by the knife, the stem of the *roemer* and its beautiful light reflection on the table. A walnut and some hazelnuts are carefully placed around the stem of the *roemer*, to avoid an empty space on the table. In the depiction of a simple meal, also called '*ontbijtje*', dated 1642 here presented, we see the painter at the height of his mastery. Each object is impeccably placed within the composition. This painting belongs to a group of still lifes from the early 1640s that is characterized by the artist's careful paring down of objects, ultimately culminating in a single, free standing monumental *roemer*.

WWB

#### Notes

- 1 The first paragraph of this entry is adopted from Brunner-Bulst's entry in *Salomon Lilian Old Masters 2019*, cat. no. 6.
- 2 Two notarial acts of 29 September and 11 October 1640 record that Pieter Claesz was at that time 43 years old. In earlier literature he was thought to be from Steinfurt (Westfalia), but this was a misunderstanding. He came from Berchem, as it is stated in the register of the Haarlem Municipal Orphanage, where his twin daughters were admitted several days after his death; see Brunner-Bulst 2004, pp. 134, 194 (note 185); P. Biesboer in: Haarlem/Zürich/Washington 2004-2006, p. 16; I. van Thiel-Strohman, in: N. Köhler (ed.), *Painting in Haarlem 1500 – 1850: The collection of the Frans Hals Museum*, Ghent/Haarlem 2006, p. 124.
- 3 P. Biesboer in: Haarlem/Zürich/Washington 2004-2006, pp. 16, 137 (note 22).
- 4 In a notarial act from 9 June 1661 in Amsterdam (SAA, ONA, J. Hellerus 2488, fol. 555) Berchem is recorded as 39 years old; P. Biesboer, 'Nicolaes Pietersz. Berchem: Meister aus Haarlem', in: P. Biesboer et al., *Nicolaes Berchem: Im Licht Italiens*, exh. cat. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum, Zürich, Kunsthaus Zürich, Schwerin, Staatliches Museum Schwerin 2006-2007, pp. 11, 160.
- 5 Private collection; see Brunner-Bulst 2004, cat. no. 1, pp. 9 (colour plate), 137, 138, 145, 146, 206; Haarlem/Zürich/Washington 2004-2006, cat. no. 1.
- 6 P. Biesboer, *Collections of Paintings in Haarlem 1572 – 1745 (Documents for the history of collecting: Netherlandish Inventories I)*, Los Angeles 2001; P. Biesboer in: Haarlem/Zürich/Washington 2004-2006, p. 25.
- 7 Brunner-Bulst 2004 includes 243 paintings. About 17 hitherto unknown paintings by the master have been discovered in the last 15 years.



Detail of cat. no.4

**Lucas Cranach the Elder**

Kronach c. 1472 – 1553 Weimar

*Portrait of Princess Aemilia of Saxony (1516-1591), Margravine of Brandenburg-Ansbach*

Oil on panel

85 x 56 cm.

**Provenance:**

Munich, art dealer Julius Böhler (1860-1934), 1920

Zürich, private collection, before 1932-1976

Zürich, Galerie Nathan (1978)

Zürich, private collection, until 2021

**Literature:**

M.J. Friedländer, J. Rosenberg, *Die Gemälde von Lucas Cranach*, Berlin 1932, p. 91, under cat. no. 337

D. Koeplin, T. Falk, *Lukas Cranach : Gemälde, Zeichnungen und Druckgraphik*, 2 vols., exh. cat. Basel, Kunstmuseum 1974-1976, 2 (1976), p. 711, cat. no. 630, fig. 353, as by Lucas Cranach the Younger

P. Strieder, 'Lucas-Cranach-Ausstellung in Basel' (exh. review), in: *Kunstchronik* 28/5 (1975), pp. 165-171, p. 169

M.J. Friedländer, J. Rosenberg, *The paintings of Lucas Cranach*, London 1978 (revised ed. of Friedländer/Rosenberg 1932), p. 154, cat. no. 420, fig. 420, as possibly by Lucas Cranach the Younger

C. Wilhelmi, 'Lucas Cranach (d. Ä.?) Argula von Grumbach', in: idem., *Galerie bisher unbekannter Portraits der Renaissance*, Stuttgart 2014 (see <http://www.renaissance-port.de/katalog/18-cranach/95-argula-von-grumbach.html>, accessed March 2022), as Lucas Cranach the Elder (?)

M. Hofbauer, 'Halbfigur einer Jungen Frau', in: M. Hofbauer et al., *Corpus Cranach : Digitales Cranach Werkverzeichnis* (Cranach.net), cat. no. CC-POR-820-038 (see <https://cranach.ub.uni-heidelberg.de>, accessed March 2022), as Lucas Cranach the Elder

G. Heydenreich et al., 'Portrait of a Woman', in: *Cranach Digital Archive : The Research Resource* ([www.lucascranach.org](http://www.lucascranach.org)), inv. no. PRIVATE\_NONE-P044 (see [https://lucascranach.org/PRIVATE\\_NONE-P044](https://lucascranach.org/PRIVATE_NONE-P044), accessed March 2022), as Lucas Cranach the Elder



### Lucas Cranach the Elder

Lucas Cranach the Elder was one of the four children of the painter Hans Moller or Maler (1448-1491/92) – not to be confused with the well-known painter Hans Maler zu Schwaz (1480/88-1526/29) – and his wife, whose maiden name was Hübner (d. 1491).<sup>1</sup> The family lived in Kronach, a town in the Bavarian region of Upper Franconia, from which the name Cranach is derived. While documents are lacking, it is fairly certain that Cranach was born there in around 1472. A self-portrait dated 1550 in the Uffizi, Florence, bears an inscription that identifies the sitter as Lucas Cranach the Elder, aged 77. This information is corroborated by the accounts of Cranach's first biographer, the artist's cousin Matthias Gunderam (c. 1529-1564), in 1556. Cranach was taught by his father, but otherwise not much is known about his early upbringing. He first surfaces as an artist in Vienna around 1501/02, at the age of 30. His works from that period – paintings, drawings and woodcuts – reveal his indebtedness to the work of his peer Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), yet also show an emerging, idiosyncratic artistic personality. Cranach's earliest surviving portraits, of the Rector of the Vienna University Johannes Cuspinian (1473-1529) and his wife Anna Cuspinian, date from this same period (1503), and indicate that Cranach had entered Vienna's scholarly humanist circles. They likewise tell us that portraiture was an integral part of Cranach's production from the start.

In 1504 Cranach's life took a decisive turn, when he was called to Saxony's electoral capital Wittenberg and – proof of his by then well-established reputation – was appointed Court Painter (*pictor ducalis*) by Frederick the Wise (1463-1525), Elector of Saxony. He kept this position until 1547, but was allowed to take on other commissions. Cranach was known to work fast. Soon he established a workshop that produced a variety of altarpieces, devotional pieces, portraits, woodcuts and engravings. In addition, he was responsible for larger decoration schemes (for example hunting murals no longer in existence, for which he was often praised during his lifetime), and the decoration of weddings, tournaments and other court celebrations. Thus, Cranach became responsible for the whole aesthetic of the Saxon court, a weighty position that brought him prosperity and status. In 1508 Cranach travelled to the Netherlands on a diplomatic mission. At the Mechelen court of Margaret of Austria (1480-1530) he met Emperor Maximilian (1459-1519) and his then eight-year-old grandson and successor, Charles V (1500-1556), the later adversary of his friend Martin Luther (1483-1546). Probably in 1512 Cranach married Barbara Brengel (d. 1540),

the daughter of a burgomaster of Gotha. They had three daughters – Ursula, Barbara (1520-1601), and Anna (1527-1577) – and two sons, who both became painters like their father. Hans Cranach (c. 1512-1537) died prematurely during a sojourn in Italy; and Lucas Cranach the Younger (1515-1586), who in time took over the Wittenberg workshop.

As mentioned, Cranach befriended Martin Luther, who had held the Wittenberg University's chair of theology since 1512. In 1517, among growing tensions over the abuses in the Catholic Church – spearheaded by the perverse system of indulgences – Luther formulated his famous 'Ninety-Five Theses', his protest against the so-called 'economy of salvation', which he allegedly nailed to the door of the Wittenberg Schlosskirche, a deed which in retrospect came to be considered to be the beginning of the Reformation. In 1521 he was excommunicated by Pope Leo X (1475-1521) and outlawed by Charles V. Under the protection of Frederick the Wise, though, the tireless Luther continued his mission, the Wittenberg theological milieu proving to be seminal in the development of the Reformation in Europe. Cranach was very much part of this world. He painted many portraits of Luther, his wife Katharina von Bora (1499-1552), and his collaborator Philip Melancton (1497-1560). Moreover, many of Luther's and Melancton's pamphlets and publications were adorned by Cranach's woodcuts and printed in his workshop. While himself a Lutheran, this did not prevent Cranach from depicting Catholic subject matter and portraying Catholic patrons. Among Cranach's clientele, too, the religious turmoil caused tensions and divided families. George the Bearded (1471-1539), for example, Duke of Saxony and a full cousin of Cranach's patron Elector Frederick the Wise, fought Protestantism his whole life, whereas his younger brother Henry IV the Pious (1473-1541) – his successor as Duke of Saxony – and his wife, Duchess Catherine of Mecklenburg (1487-1561) in time adopted the Lutheran faith. Despite this religious opposition, both brothers and their families were portrayed by Cranach.

During the 1520s the size and production of the workshop increased significantly, mainly through standardization processes and delegation, reflected in the many works of which different versions exist. Cranach further amplified his repertoire by focusing progressively on mythological subjects and coquettish nudes, Venuses, Lucretias and Nymphs. While in the 1530s Cranach's sons gradually made their appearances in the studio, Cranach the Elder remained its absolute, leading artistic personality. The succession of Cranach's patron, Frederick the Wise in 1525 to the Electorship of Saxony following his brother John the Steadfast (1468-1532),

and his son John Frederick the Magnanimous' (1503-1554) subsequent succession to the Electorship of Saxony, did not bring about significant artistic changes. Cranach's instantly recognizable style was normative to such an extent that it did not allow for drastic departures, nor was there probably much desire to break away from it. Cranach's position as court painter ended in 1547, when John Frederick the Magnanimous was defeated at the battle of Mühlberg. In 1550 Cranach followed his captive patron to Augsburg, and later to Innsbruck. After John Frederick's release in 1552, Cranach followed him to Weimar, where he died the following year at the venerable age of 81.

### The portrait

The excellent portrait of a lady under discussion here – identified in the following essay as that of Princess Aemilia of Saxony – exudes an instant, mesmerizing appeal. Against an impeccable bright peacock blue background, typical of Cranach's most iconic portraits, the lady in red looks at us with manifest, invigorating self-confidence. While painstaking in execution and highly stylized in clothing, pose and colouration, the portrait fully succeeds in capturing the natural presence of the sitter. The carved physiognomy of the lady's face – the elegant outlines of her forehead, high cheekbones, nose, chin and jawline – are accentuated by her almond-shaped eyes, her thin, high eyebrows, delicate rosy lips and shapely ear. She wears a stylish red beret over a gold hairnet, topped by a white ostrich feather, from which a meticulously painted little tassel hangs down on her forehead (fig. 1). The hairnet is studded with pearls, some of which form the letter G. On the beret we see the initials A and G, again stitched with pearls. Over a white undergarment of a fine fabric and an orange bodice decorated with more pearls, the woman wears a costly dress with an upstanding collar of gold tissue and red damask, which shows a pattern of linden branches that spring from a crown on the skirt below. A second crown is visible below the green lacing around her waist. The sleeves of the dress are slashed at the elbows, revealing her white chemise underneath. Surprising are the cuffs: judging from the right-hand cuff they appear – as one would have imagined – to be folded back, yet the left-hand cuff shows that they are in fact disc-shaped. From the hip down to her folded hands, a subtle waistband matches the costume.

The lady's jewelry is exquisite. On both hands she wears golden rings with precious stones. Her two pendants, though, attract most attention (fig. 2). The first, hanging from a necklace hiding under her chemise, appears in the opening. The central element of this

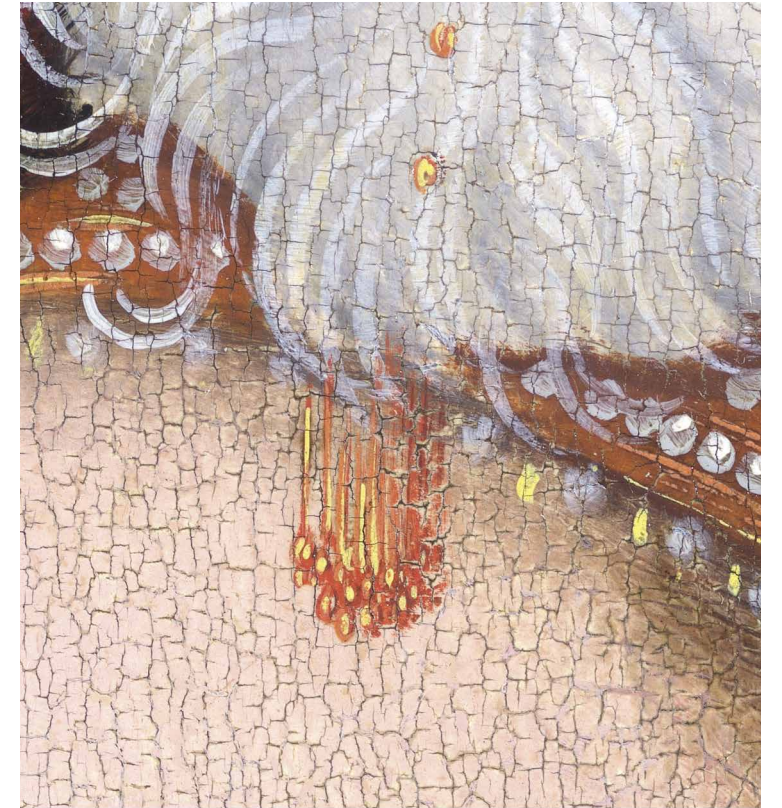


Fig. 1 Cat. no. 5, detail of the tassel hanging down from the ostrich feather

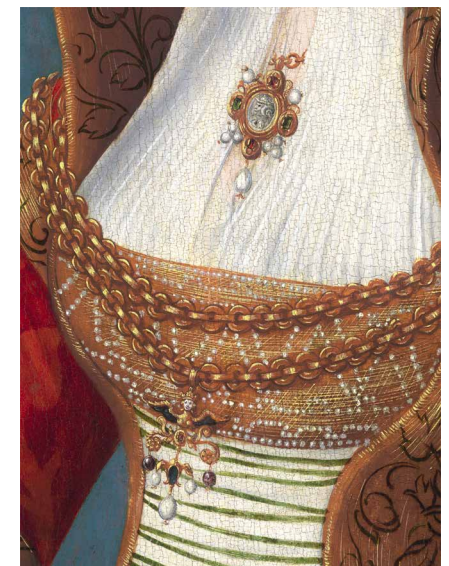


Fig. 2 Cat. no. 5, detail of the pendants

pendant is a precious, antique cameo of a helmeted man, possibly an emperor, framed in a gold setting between four precious stones, and further adorned with nine pearls. A second, golden pendant steals the show. Suspended from a larger, double golden chain that the lady carries around her shoulders, this pendant – no larger than seven to eight centimeters – consists of three parts, all made of gold. The upper element takes the shape of a smiling woman (her white face in enamel) in a golden crown, and golden wings with dark feathers. Her golden body and breasts turn into the middle decorative element. From a central gilded precious stone, leaves branch out, the largest ones forming flowers on both sides, from which two black pearls are suspended. In the lower element, hanging below, we recognize a golden fool's cap, dark blue within, from which three more pearls are suspended.

The portrait, thus, reveals several arresting and distinctive aspects, that could potentially inform us about the identity of the sitter. At the very least, they signal that she was very wealthy, the prominent crown on her dress referring to the courtly milieu, and suggesting that she belonged to the high nobility. While notoriously difficult to judge, the sitter's age is seemingly somewhere between 18 and about 29 years old. Recent scholarship dates the painting to around 1540, which would suggest a plausible year of birth roughly during the second decade of the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

#### AG

The most promising clues to the sitter's identity are, still, the letters A G on her beret, and the G on her pearl-studded hairnet. In 2014, Renaissance portrait specialist Christoph Wilhelmi proposed that these might be the initials of Argula von Grumbach (1492-c. 1564).<sup>3</sup> Argula von Grumbach, born Von Stauff, was a noblewoman from Bavaria.<sup>4</sup> In 1510 she married Friedrich von Grumbach (d. 1530), whose name she took. During the 1520s Argula became a fierce supporter of Martin Luther, resulting in her direct involvement in Reformation debates, an absolute rarity for a woman. She published pamphlets and epistles, and subsequently came into conflict with both religious and worldly authorities. She corresponded with Luther and Melancthon, and met Luther face to face in 1530, the year her husband died. Her later years were filled with misery, and she died impoverished, probably in 1554.<sup>5</sup> Argula's appearance is known from a medal (fig. 3).

Wilhelmi's identification seems worth considering. Here is a high-profile noblewoman from South Germany, an early-modern feminist Lutheran writer, and thus a logical inhabitant of Cranach's world, whose name corresponds with the initials on the hat of the sitter. Despite these conditions, the identification must be rejected. For one, Argula was born in 1492, which means that if she were the sitter of our portrait, she would be – even if the portrait was painted as early as 1530, ten years earlier than scholarly consensus dates it – at least 38 years old. While Cranach might have had a flattering brush, this seems implausible. A comparison of our sitter to Argula's portrait on the medal is not encouraging either. Additionally, after her second marriage in 1533 Argula would no longer have used her deceased first husband's name.<sup>6</sup> The magnificent attire of our sitter, moreover, seems incompatible with the economic position of Argula, whose financial situation worsened severely after her husband's death in 1530.



Fig. 3 Hans Schwarz, Medal with the portrait of Argula von Grumbach, F.c. 1520/25, Nürnberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum

#### Letters on clothing

It is, moreover, questionable if the letters on the hat are in fact the sitter's initials.<sup>7</sup> Many of Cranach's sitters wear clothing displaying letter combinations. As several examples will clarify, their references are various. In some cases, letters do indeed refer to the sitter's name. This is true, for instance, for the initials MK, found in ligature on the necklace of Catherine (Katharina) of Mecklenburg, the aforementioned Duchess of Saxony, in Cranach's portrait of her in Coburg (figs. 4, 5).<sup>8</sup> Two decades

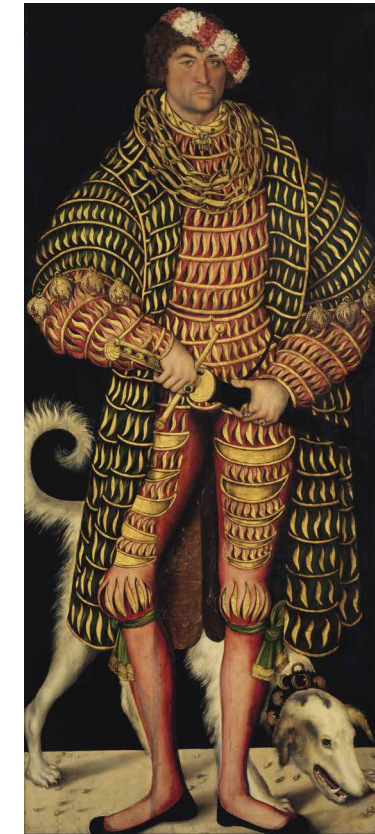


Fig. 4 Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Portrait of Catherine of Mecklenburg (1487-1561), Duchess of Saxony*, c. 1530/35, oil on panel, 54 x 38.5 cm., Coburg, Veste Coburg Kunstsammlungen



Fig. 5 Detail of fig. 4, the necklace with initials MK (in ligature)

earlier, Catherine had been depicted by Cranach in a majestic pair of pendant portraits, now in Dresden, together with her husband Henry IV the Pious, Duke of Saxony (figs. 6, 7). In that portrait, her necklace shows the initials H and K, which thus refer to her first name, and that of her husband (fig. 8). A more complicated letter combination I B C S, on a pendant worn by Princess Sibylle of Cleves (1512-1554) in Cranach's portrait of her of around 1525, turns out to allude to her betrothal to Elector John Frederick the Magnanimous.<sup>9</sup> Sibylle's father was the Duke of Jülich,



Figs. 6, 7 Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Portraits of Henry IV the Pious (1473-1541), Duke of Saxony and Catherine of Mecklenburg (1487-1561), Duchess of Saxony*, 1514, both oil on panel transferred to canvas, 184.5 x 83 cm., Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister



Fig. 8 Detail of fig. 7. The necklace with initials HK (in ligature)

Berg and Cleves, her fiancé the son of – and in later life himself – the Elector of Saxony (his portraits consistently show him with letters S on his clothing). The letters here thus allude to the merging of the two families (I B C + S). In Cranach's 1529 portrait of Joachim II Hector (1505-1571), Elector of Brandenburg in Philadelphia, the sitter's doublet shows several letters M surmounted by a heart, combined with a stitched jester's head (fig. 9). This remarkable composite is understood to refer to the name of Joachim's beloved wife Magdalena, the jesters adding to the idea that love is accompanied by folly.<sup>10</sup> Yet again a different perspective stems from the letters A B O N on the bodice of the female sitter on a portrait by Cranach the Younger in Madrid.<sup>11</sup> Here the letters do not refer to a person, but to the motto 'A Bona Fide', articulating the sitter's honesty and obligations. In contrast to these and a number of other cases, in which letters are positively recognized to refer to one or more specific persons, or reveal a specific meaning, stand many others that leave us in the dark, either because neither the sitter's identity, nor the referent of the letters are known, or – in some instances – because letters prove straight-out incompatible with the sitter's name.<sup>12</sup>



Fig. 9  
Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Portrait of Joachim II Hector* (1505-1571), *Electoral of Brandenburg*, 1529, oil on panel, 54 x 38.5 cm., Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art

### Aemilia

Recapitulating, then, that letters on clothing in Cranach's portraits could refer to the sitter, to the sitter's partner, to the partner alone, to an affianced, to the family or house to which the sitter and/or spouse belonged, to a motto, or to none of the above. Argula von Grumbach is, as has been demonstrated, not a feasible candidate to be the sitter of our portrait.<sup>13</sup> Yet, going through the letter options discussed above, a candidate that meets all the requirements with flying colours emerges in the person of a Saxony princess: Aemilia of Saxony, born on 27 July 1516 in Freiberg, Saxony, and therefore the perfect age to be our sitter. A high-ranking member of the Albertine branch of the House of Wettin – one of the eldest ruling dynasties in Europe – Aemilia was the second of the six children of Henry IV the Pious, Duke of Saxony, and his wife, the Duchess Catherine of Mecklenburg, whose above-mentioned portraits by Cranach are among the masterpieces of the Dresden Gemäldegalerie (figs. 7, 8). After Henry the Pious' death in 1541, Aemilia's brother Maurice (1521-1553) succeeded their father as Duke of Saxony, and in 1547 was elevated to the dignified position of Elector of Saxony. In 1533, at age seventeen,

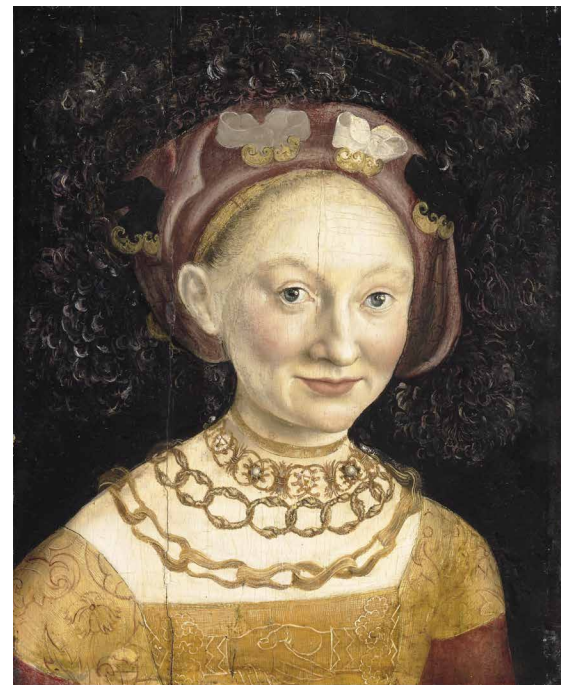


Fig. 10  
Hans Krell, *Portrait of Aemilia of Saxony* (1516-1591), c. 1530/32, oil on panel, 31.5 x 25.9 cm., Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery



Fig. 11 Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Portrait of the Princesses Sibylla* (1515-1592), *Aemilia* (1516-1591) and *Sidonia* (1518-1575) of Saxony (1516-1591), c. 1535, oil on panel, 62 x 89 cm., Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Aemilia herself married the much older George the Pious (1484-1543), Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach, of the House of Hohenzollern. George was forty-nine at the time, had been married twice before, but hadn't yet succeeded in securing a (male) dynastic successor. In fitting analogy with the Dresden portrait of Aemilia's mother, in which the letters H and K stood for the first names of herself and her husband, the initials A and G on our sitter's hat, and the G on her headdress, will here refer to Aemilia and George.

Two painted portraits of Aemilia were known so far. The earliest, by Hans Krell (1490-1565), depicts her at around 14 years old, still as a child (fig. 10).<sup>14</sup> The other, by Lucas Cranach the Elder, shows her in between her sisters Sybilla and Sidonia, in the mid 1530s (fig. 11), probably before she was nineteen and gave birth to her first daughter, Princess Sophie (1535-1587).<sup>15</sup> The physiognomic affinities between these portraits and the present sitter – a long nose, shapely chin, almond eyes and elegant jawline – are fairly obvious. Moreover, it seems evident that our sitter was the daughter of Catherine of Mecklenburg, whose portraits boast similar facial features. Two more portraits of Aemilia are found on medals.<sup>16</sup> The earliest, of 1534, struck in honour of her recent marriage to George (whose portrait adorns the reverse) depicts her around eighteen years old (figs. 12, 13). The inscription reads 'V[on] · G[ottes] · G[naden] · ÆMILIA : MARGGREV[in] · ZV · BRAN[denburg] · GEBOR[e]NE · HERGZ[ogin] · ZV : SACHS[en]'. We immediately

recognize here the same face and shapes found in our portrait. The other medal, bearing an inscription 'GOT · VORMAGK · A[lle]DINGK · 1540' ('God can do all things'), depicts Aemilia at age 24 (fig. 14). Again striking in resemblance, the medal likewise shows Aemilia in profile, wearing virtually the same clothing seen in our portrait.<sup>17</sup> The previous year 1539, Aemilia – after having given birth to two more princesses, Barbara (1536-1591) and Dorothea Katharina (1538-1604) – bore her husband his long-desired male successor, Prince George Frederick (1539-1603), the future Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach. According to George the Pious' eighteenth-century biographer, 'His [George's] third wife was Aemilia, Duke Henry of Saxony's daughter' and it was 'to the unspeakable happiness of the whole land and the father, that of this wife was born on 2 April 1539 in the afternoon Prince Georg Friedrich, who after the example of his pious and outstanding father, would become a highly commendable Prince, who would rule both the Principalities in Franconia, and the Duchy of Prussia with great fame.'<sup>18</sup> Moreover,



Figs. 12, 13 Matthes Gebel, Portrait medal of Aemilia of Saxony (1516-1591), Margravine of Brandenburg-Ansbach, and reverse: George the Pious (1484-1543), Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach, 1534, gold, Dresden, Münzkabinett



Fig. 14  
Master of the Pistorius Medal, *Aemilia of Saxony* (1516-1591), *Margravine of Brandenburg-Ansbach*, 1540, bronze, diam. 3.42 cm. Washington, National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection

Aemilia's father had, likewise in 1539, succeeded his brother George the Bearded as Duke of Saxony, finally installing Lutheranism as the land's official religion. Could the medal and our portrait have been made following these joyous events? The suggested dating of c. 1540 for the creation of our portrait, and the compelling likeness to Aemilia's profile on the medal, certainly make this a viable option.

In all probability, our portrait would have once been accompanied by a portrait of Aemilia's husband George the Pious.<sup>19</sup> While this portrait has not survived, a posthumous portrait of George by Lucas Cranach the Younger, in Schloss Grunewald, Berlin, gives an impression of what it might have looked like (fig. 15).<sup>20</sup> George died three years later, in 1543, leaving behind Aemilia with four young children. A difficult task, but George's eighteenth-century biographer has nothing but praise for her: "This duchess Aemilia was a wise, virtuous, and godly princess. She handled the guardianship and state government during the minority of her Prince Georg Friedrich with the greatest praise in those tumultuous times and brought



Fig. 15  
Lucas Cranach the Younger, *Portrait of George the Pious* (1484-1543), *Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach*, 1571, oil on panel, 101.4 x 72.2 cm., Berlin, Jagdschloss Grunewald



Fig. 16 Detail of cat. no. 5, detail of the dress

up this gentleman excellently; She has sought to preserve the evangelical religion [i.e. Lutheranism] in its purity. She tried to abolish some remnants of the papacy here and there in the country [...] which is why up to this hour her fame among the scribes, and the memory of her throughout the Brandenburg House, blooms in blessing.<sup>21</sup> In her later years Aemilia retreated. She died on 9 April 1591, aged 74, in Ansbach, the capital of her late husband, and thereafter her son's Principality, the Margraviate of Brandenburg-Ansbach.

#### The dress, the cameo and the pendant

Aemilia's luxurious red damask dress, specifically its design of branches, leaves, crowns and rosettes (fig. 16), was not specifically created for her, or meant to convey her personalized, dynastical iconographic program. In fact, the design finds its origins in Florence around 1500, and was beloved among Europe's ruling families, until well into the seventeenth century. While an actual sample of this textile in a green variant is preserved in New York (fig. 17), we encounter it in red in sixteenth-century Italian female portraits by Andrea del Sarto (1486/87-1530/31) (fig. 18) and Bronzino (1503-1572) (fig. 19).<sup>22</sup> Although the initial design might well have held a specific heraldic significance – a diamond ring also included in the pattern points to the Medici family, while additional motifs seem to relate to other ruling Florentine dynasties – it lost such specific symbolism in its subsequent afterlife. Nonetheless, the fact that Isabelle of Aragon (1470-



Fig. 17 *Heraldic Textile with the Emblems of Two Families*, Italy, c. 1500-1550, silk damask, 66 x 58.4 cm., New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1946



Fig. 18  
Andrea del Sarto, *Portrait of a Lady with a Basket of Spindles*, c. 1516, oil on panel, 76 x 54 cm., Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi



Fig. 19  
Agnolo Bronzino, *Portrait of a Lady (probably Cassandra Bandini)*, c. 1550, oil on panel, 109 x 85 cm., Turin, Galleria Sabauda



Fig. 20 Detail of cat. no. 5, detail of the upper pendant

1524), Duchess of Milan and Bari, was dressed in a damask skirt with this design when she was buried, and that, likewise, the fifteen-year-old Garzia de' Medici (1547-1562), the son of Cosimo I de' Medici (1519-1574), Duke of Florence, wore a cloak of this fabric when he was carried to his grave, point to the fabric's highly exclusive character. Reports of a Florentine textile merchant in Frankfurt in 1555, requesting the fabric to be ready for next year's Frankfurt fair, and even the reported production of the fabric in Courtrai, Flanders, further testify to its widespread popularity amongst Europe's élite.

In the same vein, the cameo that Aemilia wears around her neck, which depicts a helmeted man, possibly a Roman emperor, is surely an indication of her wealth (fig. 20). We likewise find cameos in other portraits by Cranach of the high nobility, such as the portrait of an Electress and her son in the Royal Collection.<sup>23</sup> As these were gems from antiquity, their relevance in portraiture should probably be sought not merely in their specific iconography, but also – probably foremost – in their preciousness, and their unique capacity to associate the sitter with a glorious and powerful past, or lineage. A cameo similar to the one in the present portrait is found in an *Adoration*





Fig. 21  
Rodrigo de Osana the Elder, *The Adoration of the Magi with a Donor*, c. 1475-1510, oil on panel, 191.1 x 121.3 cm., San Francisco, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Legion of Honour, detail of the donor

of the Magi by the Spanish painter Rodrigo de Osana the Elder (c. 1440-c. 1518), where it is proudly worn by the painting's donor (fig. 21).<sup>24</sup> Otherwise unrelated to our portrait, its inclusion on this donor's headdress reaffirms the major status and socio-cultural significance attached to such classical objects.

As for the wonderful pendant of the winged female figure and the jester's cap (fig. 22), such remarkable iconography must have carried a specific significance. In fact, one finds this specific combination of imagery in one of the era's most popular books, the humanist Sebastian Brant's *Das Narren Schyff* ('The Ship of Fools'), published in edition after edition, the first in Basel in 1494.<sup>25</sup> A satirical allegory in German on the folly of society, in-



Fig. 22  
Detail of cat. no. 5, detail of the lower pendant

fused with religious, philosophical and political comments, the book is organized into 112 short chapters, each dealing with a specific kind of fool, or an example of folly, and accompanied by a woodcut. Chapter 22, titled 'Die ler der wisheit' ('The teaching of wisdom') presents the allegorical figure of Wisdom addressing mankind. The woodcut introducing the chapter depicts Wisdom as an allegorical female figure with wings and a crown, very similar to the winged female figure in the pendant, and blessed by the hand of God above her (fig. 23). Wisdom is preaching from a pulpit before the clever and the foolish, the latter depicted as jesters wearing fool's caps. In her speech, she touches upon a theme that was of key relevance for Aemilia and her ruling family: "All strength and all foresight is only mine," says Wisdom. "Through me the crown comes to the king; I create



Fig. 23 Anonymous, 'The Teaching of Wisdom', woodcut, in: Sebastian Brant, *Das Narren Schyff*, Basel 1494

a law that benefits everyone; Through me the princes [Fürsten] have their land; Through me the power asserts its right."<sup>26</sup> Understood from this perspective, the pendant makes the case not only for wisdom over folly in general, which is quite literally what we see: the upper figure of Wisdom triumphant over folly below, represented by the fool's cap – but, within the structures of Renaissance society (and when worn by the appropriate person), it displays a justification of the power of the ruling nobility, reinforced by the blessing of God himself. This, of course, was a very fitting jewel for a Markgravine. While we do not know if the jewel was made for her, or if it might have been a family piece, Aemilia certainly wears it with pride.

JH

#### Notes

- For biographical references, see C. Talbot, 'Cranach family', in: J. Turner (ed.), *The Dictionary of Art*, 34 vols. New York 1996, 8, pp. 111-121; B. Hinz, in: *Saur: Allgemeines Künstlerlexicon*, var. vols. Munich/Berlin/Leipzig 1992-, 22 (1999), pp. 168-174; G. Heydenreich et al., 'Biography of Lucas Cranach the Elder', in: Cranach Digital Archive ([www.lucascranach.org](http://www.lucascranach.org)).
- The present portrait was first published in Friedländer/Rosenberg 1932, where it did not receive its own catalogue number, but was fitted in underneath the *Portrait of a Woman* in the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection, Madrid, inv. no. 113 (1929.14), amongst a section of paintings for which Lucas Cranach the Younger was proposed as possible author. In the revised Friedländer/Rosenberg 1978 (with the assistance of Dr. Dieter Koeplin) the portrait was given its own catalogue number, as by Lucas Cranach the Younger, with a dating of around 1540. Dr. Koeplin himself co-curated the seminal Cranach exhibition of 1974, in which the portrait was included as by Lucas Cranach the Younger, painted around 1545. It was not until recently that the portrait has been published again, in three online databases (see Literature), in each case as by Lucas Cranach the Elder. The most authoritative of these, the Cranach Digital Archive ([www.lucascranach.org](http://www.lucascranach.org)) is directed by Prof. Dr. Gunnar Heydenreich. In February 2022 the present portrait was inspected first-hand by Dr. Koeplin, who revoked his previous opinion concerning the attribution, suggesting an attribution to Lucas Cranach the Elder, and dating the painting c. 1540. Dr. Koeplin's expertise is available on request.
- Wilhelmi 2014.
- On Argula, her life and times, see P. Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach (1492-1554/7): A Woman before Her Time*, Eugene (OR) 2013.
- After her husband's death in 1530, Argula married Count Burian von Schlick (d. 1535) in Prague, in 1533. Von Schlick died unexpectedly in prison two years later, and Argula ran into serious financial difficulties. In 1539 both her eldest son George and her daughter Apollonia died, at the ages of 26 and 17, respectively, and in 1643 her second son Hans-Jörg was murdered following a card game. See Matheson 2013, pp. 159-168.
- Matheson 2013, p. 159, cites an official letter to Argula dated 4 February 1545, by the Würzburg council concerning the death of Argula's son Hans-Jörg von Grumbach, which opens as follows: 'Lady Argula Schickin, born Von Stauf, also called Von Grumbach etc., a widow, has written a letter to [...]'. Although this leaves open the possibility that she herself would sometimes use her deceased first husband's name – certainly in a case that involved one of her children with that name, it is unthinkable that she would have herself depicted with these initials.
- See on clothing at the courts of this period K.O. Frieling, *Sehen und gesehen werden: Kleidung an Fürstenhöfen an der Schwelle vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit (ca. 1450-1530)*, Ostfildern 2013, esp. pp. 89-103 on different kinds of embroidery and letters on clothing.
- CDA, inv. no. DE\_KSVC\_M036.
- Friedländer/Rosenberg 1978, cat. no. 305B; CDA, inv. no. PRIVATE\_NONE-P030.
- Friedländer/Rosenberg 1978, cat. nos.; 326, 327; CDA, inv. nos. US\_PMA\_739 / US\_artic\_1938-310. The female portrait, in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, shows no letters.
- Friedländer/Rosenberg 1978, cat. no. 419; CDA, inv. no. ES\_MTB\_113-1929-14.
- Cranach's *Portrait of Anna Buchner, née Lindacker*, of c. 1520, in Minneapolis may serve as an example of the latter. The sitter can be positively identified through the pendant portrait of her husband, the merchant Möriz Buchner, likewise in Minneapolis (Friedländer/Rosenberg 1978, cat. nos. 127, 128; CDA, inv. nos. US\_MIA\_57-11 / US\_MIA\_57-10). However, the letters N A N on her headdress, and the letters N H on her bodice provide no connection to her name, nor to that of her husband, and thus their meaning – possibly a reference to a motto – remains obscured. See further on the topic of letters in Cranach's portraits, and with additional examples: S. Foister, 'Lucas Cranach the Elder: Portrait of a

Woman', in: idem., *National Gallery Catalogues: The German Paintings before 1800* (nationalgallery.org.uk) published online 2015 (website accessed March 2022).

The meaning of the letter M found in the National Gallery's *Portrait of a Woman* (Friedländer/Rosenberg 1978, cat. no. 172; CDA, inv. no. UK\_NGL\_291) remains unexplained.

13 Based on initials, Argula's daughter Apollonia von Grumbach remains a hypothetical possibility. Apollonia was only 17 when she died in 1539 – rather young to be our sitter – around which time the portrait would have been painted. It seems, however, impossible that Argula's financial position at the time, as explained above, would have allowed for such an exquisite portrait of a girl wearing extremely costly clothing and jewelry. We have, moreover, no idea of what Apollonia looked like. The hypothesis must thus be rejected.

14 CDA, inv. no. UK\_WAG\_1222.

15 Friedländer/Rosenberg 1978, cat. no. 301; CDA, inv. no. AT\_KHM\_GG877. The painting was first identified as depicting the princesses by H. Zimmermann, 'Zur Ikonographie von Damenbildnissen des älteren und des jüngeren Cranach', in: *Pantheon* 28 (1969), pp. 283-293. For a recent discussion of the painting, see A. Hoppe-Harmoncourt, in: S. Haag et al., *Dürer, Cranach, Holbein: die Entdeckung des Menschen: das deutsche Porträt um 1500*, exh. Vienna, Kunsthistorischen Museum, Munich, Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung 2011-2012, p. 131, cat. no. 69. See also T. Holste, *Die Porträtkunst Lucas Cranachs d. Ä.*, diss. Kiel, Christian-Albrechts-Universität 2004, pp. 120-125 (available online: [https://macau.uni-kiel.de/receive/diss\\_mods\\_00001383](https://macau.uni-kiel.de/receive/diss_mods_00001383)), for a further discussion of the Vienna portrait and the portrait by Hans Krell.

16 In addition to the two medals discussed and depicted here, another medal dated 1534 depicts both George and Aemilia together in profile. See Zimmermann 1969, p. 286, fig. 4; Holste 2004, p. 123, and fig. 62.

17 See J.G. Pollard, *Renaissance Medals (The collections of the National Gallery of Art: systematic catalogue)*, 2 vols., Washington 2007, 2 (France, Germany, the Netherlands, and England), p. 697, cat. no. 691. The identification of the portrait follows from an inscription on an example of the medal in the Dresden Münzkabinett (inv. 1991/A1): 'AEMILIA HEINRICI PII DVC. SAX. FILIA [etc.]' ('Aemilia, daughter of Duke Henry the Pious').

18 J.H. Schülin, *Leben und Geschichte Des weyland Durchlauchtigsten Marggraff Georgens zugenannt des Frommen*, Frankfurt/Leipzig 1729, pp. 170-172.

19 This would also concur with our sitter's position, facing the left, whereas her husband on the pendant portrait would be facing towards her. The lack of a signature on our painting could also find a satisfying explanation in this hypothesis, as the male pendant would have carried the signature. See also the expertise of Dr. Dieter Koeplin (February 2022, available on request), who similarly suggests a now missing, signed pendant.

20 CDA, inv. no. DE\_SPSG\_GKI1048.

21 Schülin 1729, pp. 170-171.

22 See D.L. Krohn, in: A. Bayer (ed.), *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy*, exh. cat. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fort Worth, Kimbell Art Museum, 2008-2009, pp. 125-126, cat. no. 53. See also M. Westerman Bulgarella, 'Un Damasco Mediceo: Ricerche sulla sua origine, significato e uso nella pittura Fiorentina del Cinque e Seicento', in: *Jacquard* 30 (1996/97), pp. 2-13.

23 CDA, inv. no. UK\_RCL\_403373.

24 I am grateful to Dr. Suzanne van Leeuwen, curator and conservator of jewelry in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, for bringing this painting to my attention.

25 I wish to thank Dr. Sara van Dijk, curator of textiles in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, and co-curator of the recent exhibition 'Remember me' on Renaissance portraits (see S. van Dijk, M. Ubl, *Remember me: Renaissance portraits*, exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum 2021-2022) for drawing my attention to this wonderfully appropriate woodcut, and for her continuous interest in and input about the present

portrait, the sitter's clothing and her jewelry. I have greatly benefitted from our entertaining discussions, her expert advice and insightful suggestions.

26 S. Brant, *Das Narrenschiff*, Basel 1494, chap. 22: 'All sterck vnd all fürsichtikeyt / Stot zu mir eyn spricht die wißhkeyt / Durch mich die künig hant jr kron / Durch mich all gsatz mit recht vff ston / Durch mich die fürsten hant jr landt / Durch mich all gwalt jr rechtspruch hant.' See [www.narragonien-digital.de](http://www.narragonien-digital.de) (website accessed April 2022).



Detail of cat. no. 5

**Gaspar de Crayer**

Antwerp 1584 – 1669 Ghent

*Assumption of the Virgin*

Oil on canvas

66 x 42.5 cm.

**Provenance:**

Brussels/Ghent, collection of Gaspar de Crayer (1584-1669)

Ghent, collection of Jan van Cleve (1646-1716)

Belgium, private collection, until 2020

**Literature:**

Unpublished

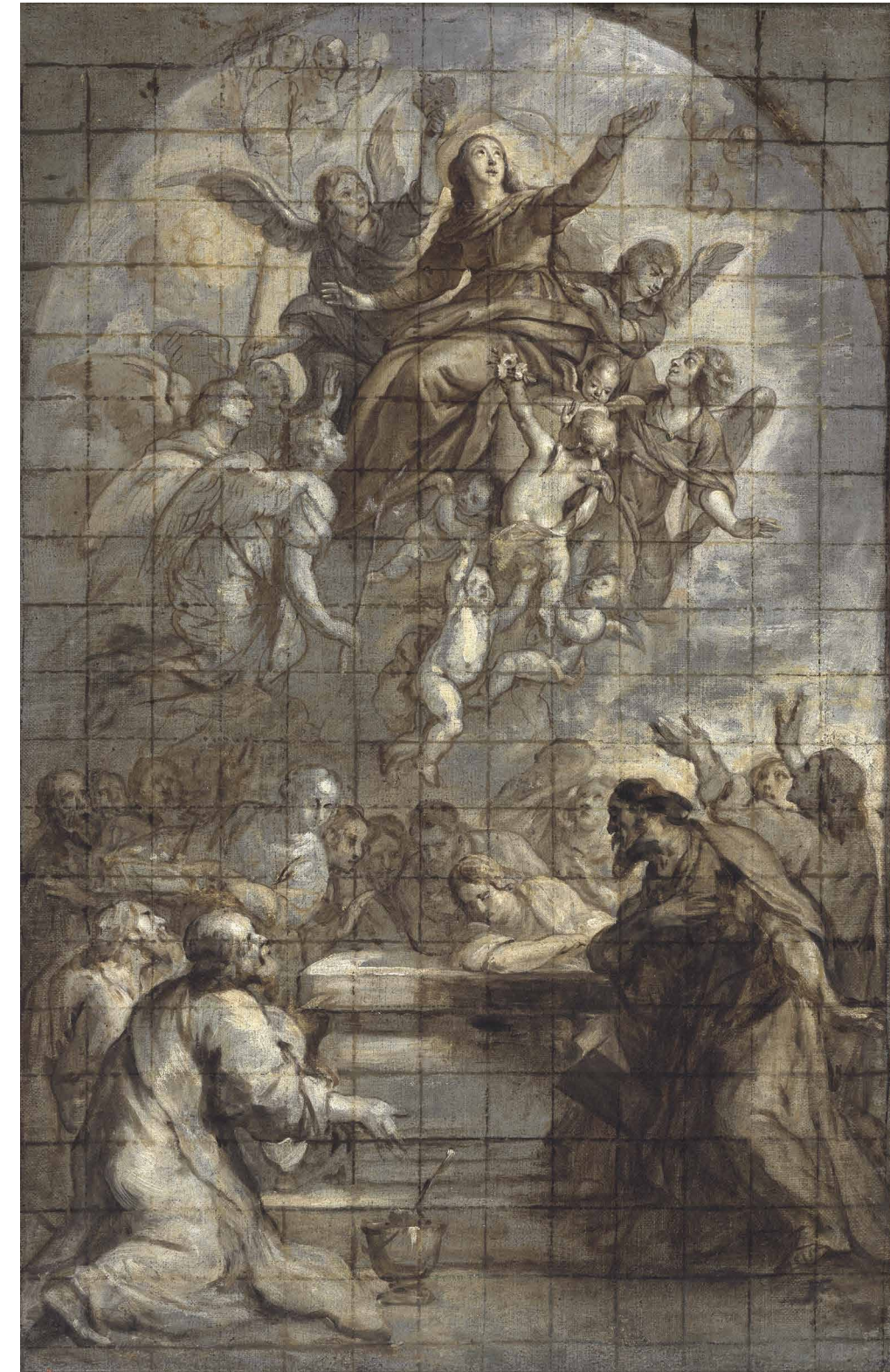
**Gaspar de Crayer**

Though born in Antwerp, Gaspar de Crayer, son of the schoolmaster, calligrapher and art trader Gaspar de Crayer the Elder and his first wife Christina van Apshoven, pursued a painting career in Brussels.<sup>1</sup> De Crayer's choice of the capital was remarkable: Antwerp had long been the artistic epicentre of the Southern Netherlands, and De Crayer's family were well connected in the city's art-loving circles. However, the lure of the Brussels court and the governmental élite seem to have prompted his decision. According to the painter's biographer Cornelis de Bie (1627-1715), in Brussels De Crayer took up lessons with Raphael Coxcie (c. 1540-1616), court painter to the Archdukes Isabella Clara Eugenia (1566-1633) and Albert (1559-1621). This apprenticeship must have taken place in the earliest years of the seventeenth century. De Crayer is first documented in Brussels in November 1607, when he became a master of its Guild of St Luke, the organization he would subsequently serve as dean during the years 1611-1616.

While it wasn't until 1635 that De Crayer himself became court painter to the new sovereign of the Southern Netherlands, Cardinal Infante Ferdinand (1609/10-1641) – and later to his successor Archduke Leopold Wilhelm (1614-1662) – he was never short of work. From early on in his career he received commissions for altarpieces, destined for churches and monasteries,

initially in and around Brussels. Spearheaded by the Counter-Reformation, churches in the Catholic south were systematically redecored. Well aware of the artistic and commercial opportunities this offered, De Crayer specialized in monumental, dynamic, multi-figure religious works with strong narrative and visual impact. In order to meet demand, he ran a large studio with many assistants and pupils, just like the slightly older Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) in Antwerp. De Crayer, who still had family in Antwerp whom he visited regularly, must have known Rubens personally, as he painted several copies after his works that he could only have seen in Rubens' Antwerp studio. Moreover, following Rubens' death De Crayer – having close ties with the Habsburg Court – played a significant role in the sale of Rubens' estate to Philip IV of Spain (1606-1665).

With De Crayer's fame spreading, more prestigious commissions fell his way, national and international. In 1635 he was chiefly responsible for the execution of the decoration program of the Cardinal Infante's Joyous Entry in Ghent – the city where he would eventually relocate in 1664. In 1647, the year Leopold Wilhelm was appointed Governor of the Southern Netherlands, De Crayer refused – probably for reasons of religion and loyalty – a prestigious invitation by the Dutch painter/architect Jacob van Campen (1596-1657) to contribute to the decoration of the Oranjezaal at the palace Huis ten Bosch



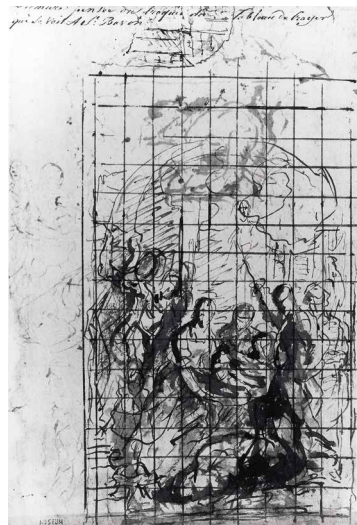


Fig. 1  
Gaspar de Crayer, *The Decapitation of St John the Baptist*, c. 1658, pen in brown on paper, 25 x 17 cm., Ghent, Museum voor Schone Kunsten Gent



Fig. 2  
Gaspar de Crayer, *The Decapitation of St John the Baptist*, 1658, oil on canvas, 335 x 254 cm., Ghent, Cathedral

Fig. 3  
Gaspar de Crayer, *The Ascension of St Catherine*, c. 1645/50, oil on canvas, 74 x 53 cm., Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland

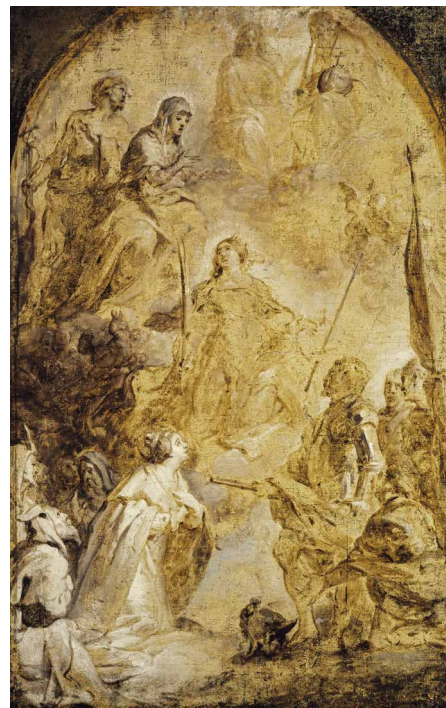


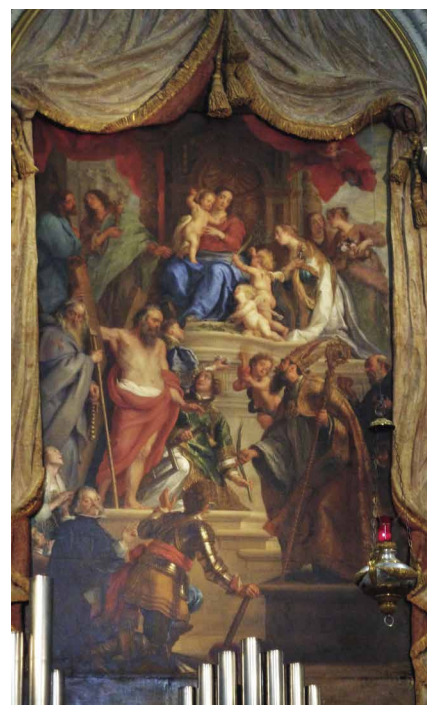
Fig. 4  
Gaspar de Crayer, *The Ascension of St Catherine*, c. 1645/50, oil on canvas, 560 x 330 cm., Brussels, Church of St Catherine



Fig. 5  
Gaspar de Crayer, *The Virgin and Child among Various Saints*, c. 1646, oil on canvas, 74 x 53 cm., Munich, Alte Pinakothek



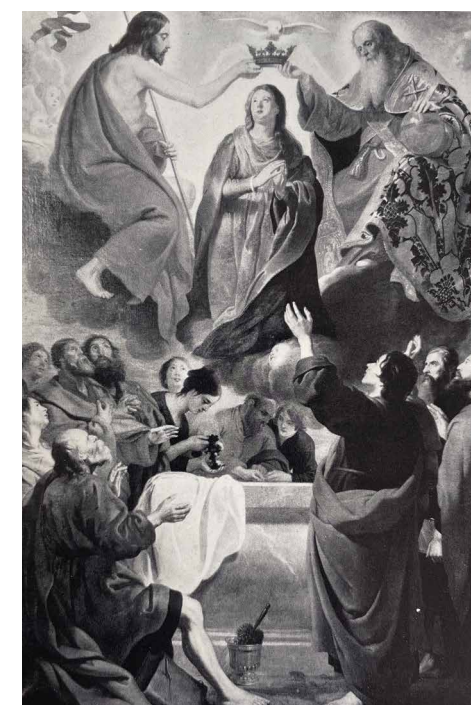
Fig. 6  
Gaspar de Crayer, *The Virgin and Child among Various Saints*, 1646, oil on canvas, 594 x 385 cm., Munich, Theatine Church



### Modelli

A busy workshop such as De Crayer's, with its prolific and large-scale production, could not function without the help of an arsenal of preliminary studies, ranging from loose sketches to *modelli*, models that rendered the painting-to-be in a reduced format and thus essential aids in the painting process. Indeed, a significant number of De Crayer's *modelli* survive.<sup>2</sup> Executed on various supports (paper, canvas, panel), in different sizes and mediums (black chalk, gouache or oil, in *grisaille* or colour) and sometimes gridded, they form a heterogeneous group of about 40 works.<sup>3</sup> Varying in ambition, they range from sketches on paper (fig. 1) that merely anchor the composition (fig. 2), to fully developed preparatory renderings in oil such as the *modelli* in the National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, and the Alte Pinakothek in Munich (figs. 3, 5), which present the definitive compositions (figs. 4, 6) in considerable detail.<sup>4</sup> The present unpublished *modello* is among the finest of the latter sort. Exemplary in every sense – masterly executed *en grisaille*, gridded, and relatable on a one-to-one basis to an extant altarpiece by De Crayer, his *Assumption* in Watervliet (fig. 7) – it allows for a nuanced understanding of De Crayer's creative process and the choices that were made.

Fig. 7  
Gaspar de Crayer, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, 1623, oil on canvas, 382 x 273 cm., Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts



near The Hague. He did, however, take on commissions in Spain and Germany, where between 1658-1662 he executed various altarpieces, amongst others for Prince Maximilian Willibald of Waldburg-Wolfegg (1604-1667). Testifying to his status at that point is the 1658 correspondence concerning an altarpiece for St Martin's church in Amberg, in which De Crayer is referred to as 'der berühmteste Mahler in Niderland', the most famous painter in the Netherlands. During the last years of his life De Crayer collaborated closely with his last pupil Jan van Cleve (1646-1716), who would carry on working in his master's style after De Crayer's death in January 1669.

Whereas De Crayer's earliest works still echo the work of elder masters – predominantly Maerten de Vos (1532-1603), Hendrick de Clerck (c. 1560-1630) and his own master Coxcie – the impact of Rubens becomes increasingly manifest. While Rubens' example remained of major importance throughout De Crayer's career, Anthony Van Dyck's (1599-1641) work from his second Antwerp period (1627-1635) formed another significant source of inspiration. Although De Crayer never visited Italy, he showed – no doubt inspired by Rubens and Van Dyck – a keen interest in the works of the Venetian painters, primarily Titian (1490-1576) and Paolo Veronese (1528-1588), whose works he must have known through prints.

### The Assumption

The subject at hand, the Assumption of the Virgin, was strongly favoured by De Crayer and his commissioners (no less than sixteen Assumptions by his hand are known<sup>5</sup>). Following decades of vigorous attacks on her cult and its visual manifestations, the Counter-Reformation reinstated the veneration and glorification of Mary as the chief element in Catholic religious experience that it had always been, prior to the outbreak of the Reformation.<sup>6</sup> Leaning on a vast pictorial tradition, the subject, from the beginning of the seventeenth century onwards, quickly regained popularity, both in paintings (altarpieces), prints and books. Not mentioned in the Bible, the story's main elements are found in the *Legenda Aurea*, the hugely popular collection of hagiographies compiled by Genoa's archbishop Jacobus de Varagine (c. 1230-1298) in the last quarter of the thirteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Following Mary's death, the apostles presumably buried her in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (possibly the Kiron Valley, northeast of Jerusalem):

*'And then the apostles bore Mary unto the monument and sat by it, as our Lord had commanded, and on the third day Jesu Christ came with a great multitude of angels and bade salutations to the Apostles. [...] And the Saviour spake and said: Arise up, haste thee, my culver or dove, tabernacle of glory, vessel of life, temple celestial, and like as thou never feltest conceiving by none atouchment, thou shalt not suffer in the sepulchre corruption of body. And anon the soul came again to the body of Mary, and issued gloriously out of the tomb, and thus was received in the heavenly chamber, and a great company of angels with her.'*<sup>8</sup>

Our *modello* depicts this ecstatic moment, when the revived Virgin is assumed to heaven, touched by divine light. In the upper half we see her, accompanied by a multitude of putti and angels, one of whom holds a crown over her head, reflecting Christ's promise ('Come my chosen and I shall set thee in my seat [...] come, thou shalt be crowned.'). while another angel holds a lily, symbol of her virginity. Below her she leaves behind the apostles in utter astonishment at these sensational events, some dramatically gesturing upwards with their arms and hands, others staring into the empty sarcophagus. Among the eleven apostles (Saint Thomas was said to have arrived after the assumption) we see the 'three maidens that were there [who] took off the clothes from the body for to wash it.' The goblet in front of the sarcophagus refers to this cleansing and preparation of Mary's body, and is found likewise in Assumptions by Venetian painters, such as Tintoretto (1518-1594) and Veronese.<sup>9</sup> The goblet also features in two other Assumptions by De Crayer that feature the apostles and the maidens, the early *Assumption* altarpiece of 1623 now in Dijon (fig. 8), and an undated drawing in the Albertina in Vienna (fig. 9).<sup>10</sup> Clearly, these works relate to



Fig. 8  
Gaspar de Crayer, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, brown pen and wash in brown and blue-grey wash over graphite on paper, 36.4 x 24.2 cm., Vienna, Albertina



Fig. 9  
Albrecht Dürer, *Ascension of Christ*, 1510, woodcut, 12.6 x 9.8 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 10  
Peter Paul Rubens, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, c. 1615/16, oil on canvas, 500 x 338.5 cm., Brussels, Royal Museums of Fine Art

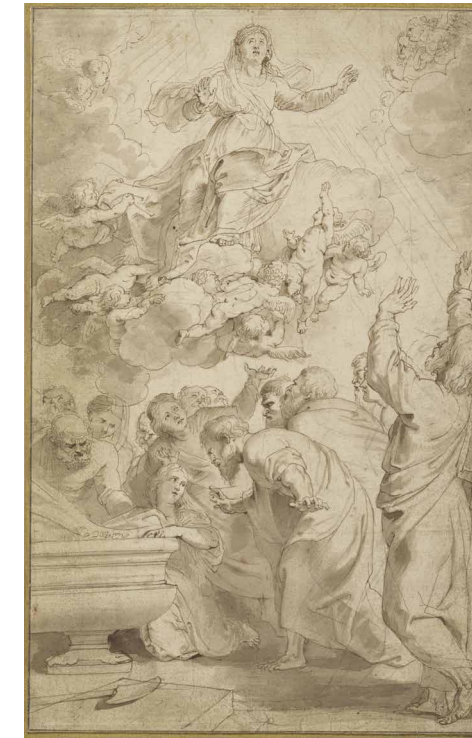


Fig. 11  
Peter Paul Rubens, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, c. 1612/14, pen and brown ink, brown wash over black chalk, incised for transfer, 30 x 18.9 cm., Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum

the present composition, in a general sense as well as in some specific elements. All three show the assumption in the upper half, and the apostles around the centrally placed sarcophagus in the lower half. Moreover, in addition to the recurring goblet, one recognizes similarities in the poses, such as that of the figure leaning into the sarcophagus that appears both in the Vienna drawing and in the present *modello*. Likewise, the *modello's* kneeling apostle to the left strongly echoes the same figure in the Dijon altarpiece, a motif ultimately derived from an *Ascension* woodcut by Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) (fig. 10). Still, it was above all Rubens who underpinned De Crayer's efforts, especially in relation to the present *modello*.

### Rubens

Just like De Crayer, Rubens depicted the Assumption many times, in an ongoing development of pictorial ideas, yet nearly all following a similar visual trajectory.<sup>11</sup> Of a standing format, they show Mary's assumption within a whirl of angels and putti in the upper part, and the apostles with the maidens in the lower part, mostly gathered around the sarcophagus. Rubens' *Assumption* of c. 1615/16, now in the Museum in Brussels (fig. 11) would have particularly pleased De Crayer, who knew it well, as it was the

main altarpiece in the Church of the Discalced Carmelites in Brussels.<sup>12</sup> For the Virgin grouping in the present *modello*, De Crayer strongly relied on Rubens' figure of Mary who, gazing up to heaven above, holds her right arm downwards, while raising her left arm and hand upwards, thus creating a strong upward diagonal, further accentuated by the downward diagonal of her legs. De Crayer's sole adjustment was to turn Mary's body more to her right, thereby emphasizing the aspect of her *being* assumed, sideways. De Crayer also took note of the composition of Rubens' *Assumption* of 1612 now in the Getty Museum (fig. 12), done in preparation for an engraving by Theodoor Galle (1570/71-1633).<sup>13</sup> De Crayer surely knew Galle's engraving, yet given his close connection with Rubens and his heirs he might also have been familiar with Rubens' original design. By placing the sarcophagus in the centre of his composition, De Crayer chose classical balance over Rubens' baroque asymmetry. However, the dramatic qualities of Rubens' two most prominent apostles – one bending forwards while stretching out his arms in awe (a motif directly derived from Caravaggio's *Supper at Emmaus* in the National Gallery, London), the other raising his face and hands towards the miracle above – were not lost on him. They are essentially recycled in our *modello*, in which the apostle outstretching his



Fig. 12  
Peter Paul Rubens, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, c. 1616/20, oil on canvas, 156 x 109 cm., Schleissheim, Neues Schloss

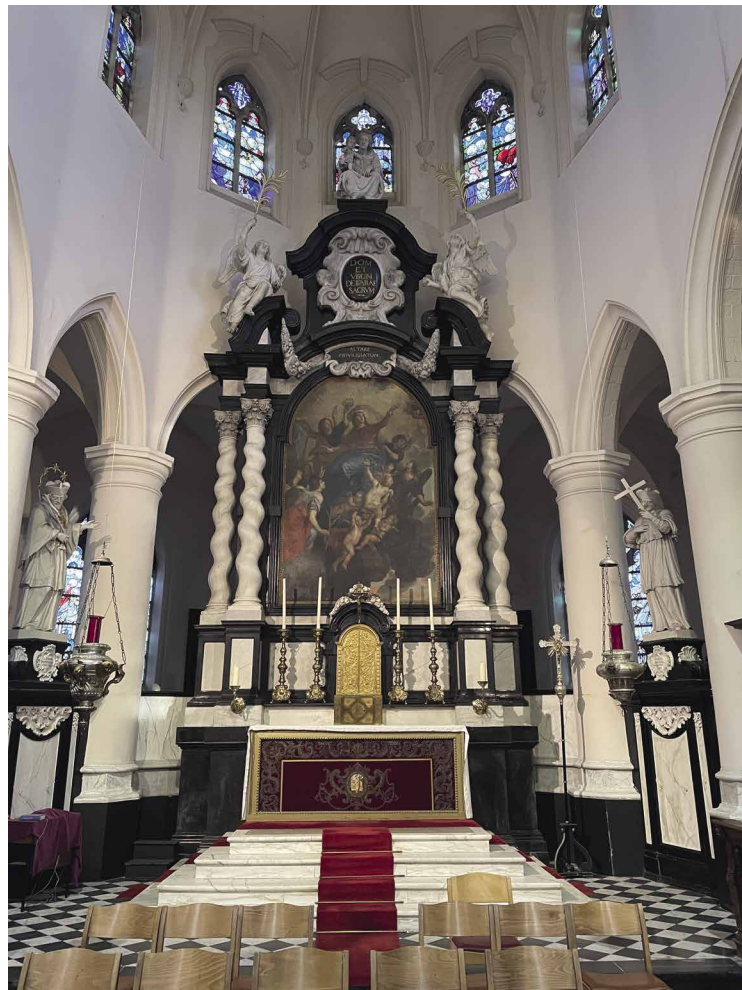


Fig. 13  
Watervliet, choir of the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady, with De Crayer's *Assumption of the Virgin* on the high altar

arms now directs his right hand to his chest, whereas the other apostle was repositioned behind the former. Apostles raising their hands in the sky are found in many of Rubens' Assumptions. One of these, in an *Assumption* now in Schleissheim (fig. 13), is so close to the apostle in our *modello* that it seems plausible that De Crayer modeled his figure on this work.<sup>14</sup>

#### The Watervliet church, the commission, the *modello* and the altarpiece

In the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady (Onze-Lieve-Vrouw-Hemelvaart) in Watervliet, some thirty kilometers north of Ghent, one still finds De Crayer's *Assumption* altarpiece *in situ*, based on our *modello*.<sup>15</sup> Relatively small yet rich, it is referred to in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources as a 'sumptuous church'.<sup>16</sup> During the 1640s and early 1650s especially, considerable renovation of church furniture was undertaken. Following the installment of new choir stalls, a communion bench, two confessionals and a new organ, the crowning accomplishment was the commissioning of a new and costly high altar around 1648-1651, for which the talented sculptor Lucas Faydherbe (1617-1697) – a student of Rubens – was approached. As the church cashbooks mention extra expenses for him and his assistants in 1650, Faydherbe in all probability delivered his work that year (fig. 13).<sup>17</sup> At around this time, too, De Crayer would have received the commission for the new altarpiece, to replace the old altarpiece then attributed to Quinten Massys (1466-1530). The church's pastor at the time was a certain Pieter Boone, but since he was in ongoing conflict with the Lord of Watervliet, Albert Leboeuf (d. 1654), his role seems to have been limited. Rather, the vice-pastor Pieter Manilius, together with Leboeuf, were the driving forces behind the extensive renovation projects, and they would likely have commissioned De Crayer.<sup>18</sup> According to the church's cashbook during the years 1652-1655, 'Mr. Craijer [is paid] the sum of one hundred and eight pounds six shillings eight great for producing and delivering of the painting standing on the high altar'.<sup>19</sup> That De Crayer was physically present at the installment follows from a separate payment for his coach back to Ghent.

Comparing the Watervliet altarpiece to our *modello* (figs. 14, 15) reveals a major revision: the lower half of the *modello*'s initial composition, the scene with the apostles and maidens surrounding the sarcophagus, is missing in the altarpiece. The reason for this decision is not documented. As the proportions of the final altarpiece (c. 350 x 220 cm. = a ratio of 1:1.59) and the *modello* (66 x 42.5 cm. = a ratio of 1:1.55) are nearly identical and would have therefore both fitted Faydherbe's altar, this would not have been the issue. Rather, this choice would have been made to increase the visual impact, to be achieved by significantly enlarging the assumption scene at

the expense of the original conception of narrative unity of the scenes in the upper and lower half, as established in the *modello*. Presumably this was decided by Manilius and Leboeuf *cum suis* after reviewing the present *modello*, possibly in the presence of De Crayer. That this was a rather late decision seems implied by the *modello* itself, which has all the characteristics of a final design, and was certainly no longer a 'work-in-progress'. Already carefully gridded, its composition was ready to enlarge onto the final canvas. The sensitive delineation in brown noticeable in the upper half of the *modello*, which adds further detail, might be indicative of this late volte-face.

The decision to focus solely on an enlarged assumption scene while adhering to the dimensions dictated by Faydherbe's altar frame necessarily brought about compositional adjustments. The *modello* positioned Mary's head slightly to the right of the middle axis. Its grid counts thirteen horizontal by twenty-and-a-half vertical squares, the head being positioned exactly on the line dividing the seventh and eighth horizontal square. In order to re-align to a composition with Mary's head in the centre while sticking to the original proportions, the *modello*'s composition was cropped (see fig. 15) precisely following the grid: on the left two-and-a-half squares were

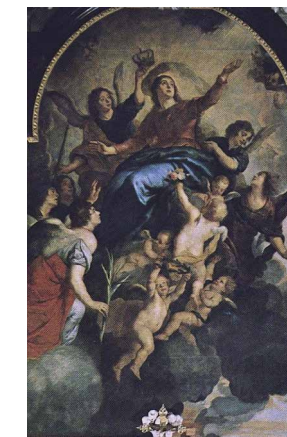


Fig. 14  
Gaspar de Crayer, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, oil on canvas, c. 1652/54, c. 350 x 220 cm., Watervliet, Church of the Assumption of Our Lady



Fig. 15  
Cat. no. 6, indication of final cropping of the composition

removed, versus one-and-a-half squares on the right. By removing seven squares below and leaving the top untouched, the original ratio of c. 1:1.5 was maintained. In consequence, the angels on the left were partly cut out of the picture plane, losing their wings in the process. The remaining heads of the apostles and the maidens below suffered an even harsher fate. No longer a logical part of the composition, they were replaced by clouds.

#### The *modello* in the studio

The *modello* was not included in the Watervliet transaction, but remained in De Crayer's workshop, where it was re-used on various occasions. First, it served as the model for another *Assumption* altarpiece, this time for the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady in Kruikebeke near Antwerp (fig. 16).<sup>20</sup> Delivered at the church on Christmas Eve in 1654. The Kruikebeke *Assumption* follows the design of our *modello*'s upper half, yet in reverse. Amongst only minor changes, Mary no longer stretches up her arm, the crown above her head is absent, while another angel, replacing the putti, supports the Virgin. This angel is so similar to the angel in De Crayer's Albertina *Assumption* discussed above (fig. 8), that a dating of that drawing c. 1650/54 seems plausible. The Kruikebeke composition was again brushed up in 1663, for an altarpiece in Schaarbeek near Brussels, in which Saints



Fig. 16  
Gaspar de Crayer, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, 1654, oil on canvas, c. 220 x 185 cm., Kruikebeke, Church of the Assumption of Our Lady



Fig. 17  
Gaspar de Crayer, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, 1663, oil on canvas, c. 330 x 220 cm., Schaarbeek (Brussels), Church of St-Servais



Fig. 17  
Gaspar de Crayer, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, 1663, oil on canvas, c. 330 x 220 cm., Schaarbeek (Brussels), Church of St-Servais



Fig. 18  
Workshop of Gaspar de Crayer, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, 1672, oil on canvas, c. 320 x 250 cm., Amberg, Jesuit College



Fig. 19  
Jan van Cleve, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, 1678, chalk and wash on paper, 14.5 x 9.8 cm., Ghent, Museum voor Schone Kunsten Gent



Fig. 20  
Jan van Cleve, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, 1678, oil on canvas, 350 x 200 cm., Ghent, St James's Church

Peter and Paul witness the Virgin's assumption (fig. 17).<sup>21</sup> Not only is the motif of Mary's crowning reinstated, the figure of St Peter is so akin to that of the kneeling apostle in our *modello*, that its borrowing seems evident. At around this time De Crayer's last pupil Jan van Cleve entered the workshop. After De Crayer's death in 1669, Van Cleve took over the workshop's inventory, including the present *modello*, which proved to be an ongoing source of inspiration. This is evidenced by the altar piece delivered in 1672 to the Jesuits of Amberg, Germany, for their Sankt-Georgskirche (fig. 18).<sup>22</sup> Today in the Amberg Jesuit College, the altarpiece is evidence of an intense recycling of our *modello*'s composition, which it roughly mirrors, including the lower part with the Apostles gathered around the tomb. The upper Assumption scene merges elements from the *modello* (e.g. the putti below Mary) with the modifications observed in the Kruikebeke altarpiece. We again recognize the *modello*'s composition in a drawing that carries Van Cleve's name and is kept in the museum in Ghent (fig. 19). While the drawing is undated, it relates to Van Cleve's *Assumption* altarpiece for St James' church in Ghent, datable to 1678 (fig. 20). The altarpiece combines elements from the drawing – the putti with tambourines and books, and the angel to the right holding a palm branch – with motifs only found in the *modello*, the left-hand angel with the lily in particular. As such, the drawing and the altarpiece once more testify to the composition's continuous appeal and success.

JH

#### Notes

- 1 Biography based on H. Vlieghe: *Gaspar de Crayer: Sa vie et ses oeuvres*, 2 vols., Brussels 1972, pp. 33-58; H. Vlieghe, 'Crayer, Gaspar [Caspar] de', in: *Grove Art Online* (published 2003, www.oxfordartonline.com/groveart, website accessed April 2021); H. Vlieghe, 'Gaspar de Crayer, 1584-1669', in: S. Vézilier-Dussart, A. Merle du Bourg, *Entre Rubens et Van Dyck: Gaspar de Crayer (1584-1669)*, exh. cat. Cassel, Musée de Flandre 2018, pp. 26-41.
- 2 On De Crayer's *modellii*, see esp. H. Vlieghe, 'Further Thoughts on the Use of Drawings in Gaspar de Crayer's Workshop', in: *Master Drawings* 36 (1998), pp. 83-90, esp. p. 83; Cassel 2018, pp. 110-153 (chapter 5, cat. nos. 5.1-20): 'L'atelier: une production prolifique et structurée'.
- 3 The total number of *modellii* in their various appearances is about 40, of which fourteen are executed in oil. See Vlieghe 1972, cat. nos. A13, A30, A39, A52, A100, A103, A112, A137, A169, A172r/v, A182, A189, A205, A209, A222, A225, A229; H. Vlieghe, 'Gaspar de Crayer: Addenda et Corrigenda', in: *Gentse Bijdrage tot de Kunstgeschiedenis en de Oudheidkunde* 25 (1979-1980), pp. 158-208, figs. 25, 29-35, 37-39; H. Vlieghe, 'Drawings by Gaspar de Crayer from the Ghent Album', in: *Master Drawings* 26 (1988), pp. 119-132, figs. 30-33, 34a, 35a; E. Bergvelt, M. Jonker, *Dutch and Flemish paintings: Dulwich Picture Gallery*, London 2016, pp. 54-55 (*modello* for Vlieghe 1972, cat. no. A120); the present work.
- 4 See Vlieghe 1972, cat. nos. A172, A173 (figs. 1, 2); A130, A100, A101 (figs. 4-6); Vlieghe 1979/80, fig. 29 (fig. 3). See also Cassel 2018, cat. no. 5.4 (fig. 5), 5.6 (fig. 3).
- 5 Vlieghe 1972, cat. nos. A15, A30 (drawn *modello*), A31, A62, A63, A98, A135, A136, A158, A159, A174, A197, A199, A201. To his list can be added the present work, and a drawing in the Albertina, Vienna (inv. no. 8393).
- 6 On the topic, see D. Freedberg, *Rubens: the Life of Christ after the Passion (Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard 7)*, London/Oxford/New York 1984, pp. 138-143 ('The paintings of the Assumption of the Virgin').
- 7 Freedberg 1984, p. 138 rightly points out that all accounts are based upon the second-century *Liber de Transitu Virginis* and the Latin text of the Pseudo-Melito.
- 8 J. de Voragine (W. Caxton transl., F.S. Ellis ed.), *The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints*, 7 vols., London 1900, 4, pp. 110-126 ('The Assumption of our Lady'). See <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/goldenlegend/GoldenLegend-Volume4.asp#Assumption>, website consulted August 2021.
- 9 E.g. Tintoretto's 1555 *Assumption* in I Gesuiti, and Veronese's 1586 *Assumption* in the Gallerie dell'Accademia, both in Venice.
- 10 Vlieghe 1972, cat. no. A15. For the drawing: Vienna, Albertina, inv. no. 8393.
- 11 For an overview of Rubens' Assumptions, see Freedberg 1984, cat. nos. 35-45 (fourteen in total). Most Assumptions by Rubens show both the assumption and the apostles. Cat. nos. 36 (Vienna, Albertina) and 39 (Oslo, Nasjonalgaleriet), the only drawings, are the exception, as they are sketches of the upper part (assumption) and lower part (apostles), respectively. A drawn *Assumption* by Rubens made in preparation for a print resurfaced in 1983, see note 13. For Rubens' ceiling painting of the *Assumption* for the Antwerp Jesuit Church, see J.R. Martin, *The Ceiling Paintings for the Jesuit Church in Antwerp (Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard 7)*, London/New York 1968, cat. no. 16.
- 12 Freedberg 1984, cat. no. 38.
- 13 Rubens' drawing and Galle's engraving were commissioned by the Antwerp publishers Balthasar (1574-1641) and Jan Moretus (1576-1618) for their 1614 publication of the *Breviarium Romanum* (the Catholic liturgical prayerbook). See J.R. Judson, C. van de Velde, *Book Illustrations and Title-Pages (Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard 21)*, London/Philadelphia 1978, cat. nos. 27 (engraving) and 27a (drawing). At the time, the drawing was presumed lost. It surfaced in 1983, and was bought by the Getty Museum. See recently A. Greist, in: S. Suda, K. Nickel (eds.), *Early Rubens*, exh. cat. San Francisco, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario 2019-2020, pp. 272-273.
- 14 Freedberg 1984, cat. no. 40. The Schleissheim *Assumption* is first mentioned in

the will of Count Johann Maximilian Fugger (1661 to 1731). An engraving after the painting in reverse, with considerable variations, was executed by Willem Panneels (Freedberg 1984, fig. 103). However, due to the compositional redistribution the figure of the apostle raising his hands here lacks the prominence which is so marked in the painting, which makes it less likely that De Crayer based himself on the engraving.

- 15 Vlieghe 1972, cat. no. A158.
- 16 For a discussion of the church and De Crayer's altarpiece, see F. de Potter, J. Broeckaert, *Geschiedenis van de gemeenten der provincie Oost-Vlaanderen, tweede reeks – arrondissement Eeklo*, 3 vols, Ghent 1870-1872, 3 (1872), pp. 38-58 (Watervliet); E.H. English, 'Watervliet', in: *Appeltjes van het Meetjesland: Jaarboek van het Heemkundig Genootschap van het Meetjesland* 8 (1957), pp. 247-265; D. Verstraete, 'De kerk van watervliet in de 17<sup>de</sup> en de 18<sup>de</sup> eeuw', in: *Appeltjes van het Meetjesland: Jaarboek van het Heemkundig Genootschap van het Meetjesland* 12 (1961), pp. 158-180. See also E. Dhanens, *Inventaris van het kunstpatrimonium van Oost-Vlaanderen, II: Kanton Kaprijke*, Ghent 1956, pp. 132ff.
- 17 De Potter/Broeckaert 1872, pp. 43-44, citing the cashbook in the church archive, state that Faydherbe received 5,900 Carolus guilders (or 983 pounds 6 shillings) for his work on the altar. Verstraete 1961, p. 166, traces this payment to the cashbook of 1648-1651, notes the extra expenses in 1650 and points to another 250 pounds paid to Faydherbe in 1652/55 for three additional marble altar statues. He corrects Dhanens 1956, who incorrectly dates the 5,900-guilder payment to the years 1652/55 as well. English 1957, p. 254 suggests a date of 1652 for both the altar and the altarpiece.
- 18 Verstraete 1961, p. 165, 167. In around 1650/51, a new pastor Nicolaes Gerskens was appointed, who might have been involved with the commission to De Crayer as well.
- 19 De Potter/Broeckaert 1872, p. 44 (Watervliet), note 3: 'Item betaelt aen Monsieur Craijer ter somme van een hondert acht ponden ses schellingen acht grooten over het maecken ende leveren vande schilderije, staende in den hooghen altaer'. See also Vlieghe 1972, p. 319, doc. 87.
- 20 Vlieghe 1972, cat. no. A159.
- 21 Vlieghe 1972, cat. no. A197.
- 22 Vlieghe 1972, cat. no. A219, who notes that the painting 'betrays the major contribution of De Crayer's collaborators'. The altarpiece might have been ordered and begun before De Crayer's death, but was apparently delivered in 1672.

**Govert Flinck**

Cleves 1615 – 1660 Amsterdam

*Portrait of a Man in a Wide-Brimmed Hat*

Signed lower right: G. Flinck. f / 1637

Oil on panel

70.8 x 56.4 cm.<sup>1</sup>

**Provenance:**

Chislehurst (Bromley), Frogmal House, collection of John Robert Townshend, 1st Earl Sydney (1805-1890), by descent to his nephew

Chislehurst (Bromley), Frogmal House, collection of Robert Marsham-Townshend (1834-1914)<sup>2</sup>

London, Arthur J. Sulley & Co, 1915

New York, M. Knoedler & Co, July 1915<sup>3</sup>

St. Louis (MO), collection Anna Louise Busch Faust (1875-1936) and Edward A. Faust (1868-1936), 1916<sup>4</sup>

St. Louis (MO), collection Audrey Busch Faust Wallace (1903-1991) and Mahlon Brookings Wallace (1901-1977), by descent to the previous owners, until 2020

**Literature:**

N.N., *Exhibition of Works by the Old Masters, and by Deceased Masters of the British School (Winter Exhibition, 5 January to 13 March 1880)*, exh. cat. London, Royal Academy 1880, p. 13, cat. no. 49 ('School of Rembrandt')

G. Isarolo, 'Rembrandt et son entourage', in: *La Renaissance 19* (1936), pp. 3-50, p. 34

J.W. von Moltke, *Govaert Flinck 1615-1660*, Amsterdam 1965, p. 118, cat. no. 252, ill.

W. Sumowski, *Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schüler*, 6 vols., Landau/Pfalz 1983-1994, 2 (1983), pp. 1036, 1118, cat. no. 686, ill.

**Exhibited:**

London, Royal Academy, Winter Exhibition, 5 January – 13 March 1880 ('School of Rembrandt')

St. Louis, St. Louis Art Museum, 1927 and/or 1931 (?)<sup>5</sup>





### Govert Flinck

Govert Flinck was born on 25 January 1615 in Cleves (present day Germany, but under Dutch control during the Thirty Years' War, 1618-1648) into a well-off milieu of Mennonites, the Christian followers of Menno Simons (1496–1561), known for their modesty, simplicity and peacefulness.<sup>6</sup> His parents were the cloth merchant and Cleves city steward Teunis Govertsz Flinck and his wife, the daughter of the prominent Mennonite preacher and painter Ameldonck Leeuw, from Cologne. Thanks to the artist's biographer Arnold Houbraken (1660-1719), who was probably briefed by Flinck's son, we are well informed about the painter's life. Flinck, says Houbraken, had an innate inclination towards the arts. While his father wished him to become a businessman and arranged for a position at a silk merchant's, Flinck spent his time there drawing figures and animals. Eventually he was sacked, much to his parents' dismay. As tensions rose – Flinck kept on drawing and spent all his money on artist's supplies, strongly against his parents' wishes – the Mennonite teacher, painter and art dealer Lambert Jacobsz (c. 1598-1636) arrived in Cleves to preach. Born and raised in Amsterdam's Mennonite community, he had relocated to Leeuwarden in 1621. He had recently decided to scale up his art business, probably stimulated by the prospect of collaboration with the ambitious art dealer Hendrick Uylenburgh (c. 1587-1661), also a Mennonite, who since 1625 set up his art business in Amsterdam. Edified by Lambert Jacobsz' preaching and modest character, and hearing that he was a painter, the parents changed their minds. The painter could certainly use a talented assistant, and so they agreed that he would apprentice their son. After arriving in Leeuwarden c. 1629/30, Flinck teamed up with his assistant Jacob Backer (1608-1651) who was likewise raised in the Amsterdam Mennonite community. After several years of learning and gaining valuable experience here – Lambert Jacobsz' busy workshop and art business brought Flinck in contact with the work of the most fashionable artists of the moment, such as Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), Gerard van Honthorst (1594-1656), the up-and-coming Jan Lievens (1607-1674) and Rembrandt (1606-1669), this latter working for Uylenburgh – it was time for him and Backer to spread their wings and find success in Amsterdam, the thriving artistic centre of the Dutch Republic where, according to Houbraken 'Flinck, since he had very prosperous relatives [in Dutch: 'bloedvrienden', literally 'blood friends'] living there, found a first chance to demonstrate his Art.'

Upon arrival in Amsterdam in c. 1633, Flinck probably lodged with these prosperous relatives, the Mennonite Leeuw family, and worked independently for some time.<sup>7</sup> 'Yet since' says Houbraken 'at the time the manner of Rembrandt was praised throughout, so that everything had to be

done on that footing, were it to please the world, [Flinck] thought it wise to study another year with Rembrandt' who was then running the extremely busy Uylenburgh workshop. Flinck immersed himself in Rembrandt's style and manner of painting so well that 'some of his works were mistaken for, and sold as Rembrandt's'. In fact, Flinck and Rembrandt worked alongside each other on certain paintings, such as the *Portrait of Anthonie Coopal of 1635* (fig. 1).<sup>8</sup> Indeed, when Rembrandt left Uylenburgh in the spring of that year to start for himself, Flinck at age 20 seamlessly took over his position as Uylenburgh's *chef d'atelier*. Just as Rembrandt before him, Flinck moved in with Uylenburgh in the St Anthonis Breestraat, where he is documented in March 1637. Quickly maturing into one of Amsterdam's most prominent artists, Flinck gained prestigious public commissions, to



Fig. 1 Rembrandt and Govert Flinck, *Portrait of Anthonie Coopal*, 1635, oil on panel, 83,5 x 67,6 cm., New York, The Leiden Collection

portray the governors of the Arquebusier's civic guard company (1642), and the civic guard company of captain Albert Bas and lieutenant Lucas Conijn (1645) amongst others.

How long Flinck remained with Uylenburgh – 'many years' according to the painter and biographer Joachim von Sandrart (1606-1688) – is debatable.<sup>9</sup> At the very latest it was until 1644, when he bought two adjoining houses at the Lauriergracht (present nos. 76-78), adjacent to that of his cousin and dear friend Dirck Jacobsz Leeuw (1614-after 1664).<sup>10</sup> A flexible networker, Flinck gradually moved away from Rembrandt's idiom, and instead strategically chose to work in a brighter, more colourful and elegant style inspired by Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641), whose paintings he had admired in Antwerp. The new artistic direction found a willing clientele among Amsterdam's increasingly opulent elite, many of whom the affluent Flinck maintained cordial relationships with. In 1645 he married the Remonstrant daughter of a Rotterdam director of the VOC (Dutch East India Company), Ingetje Thoveling (c. 1620-1651). Flinck's witnesses were his cousins Dirck and Ameldonck Jacobsz Leeuw (1604-1647), Dirck's wealthy half-brother, who owned many works by his cousin. Ingetje soon bore Flinck a son, Nicolaes Anthonie Flinck (1646-1723). The marriage ended abruptly with Ingetje's death in January 1651. On 24 August of that year, Flinck was baptised Remonstrant, remarkably a mere two months after his long-time friend and fellow-Mennonite Jacob Backer had done the same, and three days before the latter's death.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile Flinck continued his success, working amongst others for Frederick William (1620-1688), Elector of Brandenburg, and the House of Orange. His crowning achievement, though, was his intense involvement in the decorations of the new Amsterdam town hall. After delivering two enormous canvases in 1656 and 1658, Flinck received the largest commission ever given to a Dutch painter, to paint a cycle of eight scenes of the Batavian revolt against the Romans for the lunettes located in the galleries around the central Citizens' Hall, plus four large Biblical scenes above the hall's entrances. While working on this commission, Flinck unexpectedly died in January 1660.

### The Lilian portrait

The present *Portrait of a Man in a Wide-Brimmed Hat*, signed and dated 1637, is an outstanding example of Flinck's early ventures into portraiture during his Uylenburgh period. Although previously published in Joachim von Moltke's *catalogue raisonné* on Flinck (1965), and in Werner Sumowski's *Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schuler* (1983), the painting itself had not been seen since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The information provided in these publications was incomplete and incorrect, and the illustrations of the por-

Fig. 2  
Cat. no. 6 during cleaning, New York 2020



trait were in black and white. Still not located during the recent wave of attention on Flinck – a grand overview exhibition of his work and that of his fellow Rembrandt-student Ferdinand Bol (1616-1680) was organised in 2017 in the Rembrandthuis and the Amsterdam Museum – the portrait again escaped the attention it so deserved.<sup>12</sup> After finally surfacing in the United States in 2020, the work underwent a welcome cleaning (fig. 2) which revealed Flinck's fabulous brushwork, most of all in the incarnate. For the first time, it is now possible to truly assess the painting, its outstanding quality and its iconography.

Against a brownish background fading into lighter beige, the oval-shaped portrait depicts a man wearing a large black brimmed hat, looking at the beholder with a sympathetic, attentive expression. Lit from the left, Flinck paid special attention to the rendering of the face. Using a broad palette ranging from a sandy yellow ochre to vermilion, and by distributing the paint in a complex maze of patches, he created an exceptionally three-dimensional, palpable effect. The bright highlights on the nose, in the eyes and on the lips add a distinct directness. No age is given, but with his curly brown hair, reddish-blonde moustache and goatee, rosy cheeks and full lips the sitter seems to be at the youngest in his late twenties, at the latest in his early forties. The man's unassuming clothing – loose, almost sketchily rendered, a conscious demonstration of Flinck's facility – is subdued: he wears a fine but unadorned black jacket with shoulder pads and plain rows of buttons on the chest and the sleeves. A black sash is wrapped around his middle, and a black mantle seems to cover his right shoulder and arm. A modest frivolity is provided by the lacework edges around the plain white collar, known as 'mouse-teeth'.<sup>13</sup>

In shape, style, composition and ambition the portrait clearly resonates with Rembrandt's oval male portraits of the years 1633-1635.<sup>14</sup> Portraits such as that of Dirck Jansz Pesser in Los Angeles, and the *Portrait of a Man with a Large-Brimmed Hat* in Boston, would have served Flinck as important templates (figs. 3, 4). Both are of near-identical size as the portrait discussed here, and not coincidentally both were painted in 1634, precisely when Flinck worked under Rembrandt in Uylenburgh's studio. Yet despite the obvious parallels Flinck transforms his indebtedness to Rembrandt into a personal vocabulary. Whereas Rembrandt at all times kept a strong direction in his brushwork, working with painstaking precision to create a convincing *modèle* (fig. 5), Flinck's technique deliberately aims at more spontaneity in an effort to maximise liveliness (fig. 6). A mere 22 years old, Flinck went through a rapid progression. Assessing his earliest independent portraits (of the previous year), the 1636 *Portrait of Dirck Jacobsz Leeuw* now in the Rembrandthuis, and the *Portrait of Gozen Centen* (1611/12-1677) from 1636/37 in the Rijksmuseum, one is struck by the decidedly less con-

vincing, flatter and even slightly naïve efforts in these works (figs. 7, 8).<sup>15</sup> One even observes significant development within the year 1637. The otherwise rather comparable, oval *Portrait of a Man, Aged Forty-Four* in the Mauritshuis, painted in the same year as our portrait, reveals that Flinck still struggled to reach the complexity achieved in the present work (figs. 9, 10). While the portrait surely demonstrates a major improvement on the portraits of Leeuw and Centen, the incarnate – although substantial, even fleshy – is not nearly as varied and convincingly rendered as in our portrait. Rather, it looks pasty and dull compared to the present portrait's freshness.<sup>16</sup>

#### Identification of the sitter?

From the 1640s on, Flinck developed and maintained an exceptionally powerful network among Amsterdam's regent élite. Initially, however, he relied on Uylenburgh's connections and his own, often cemented through family relations and the Mennonite faith. A survey informs us that, in-

deed, Flinck was well represented in the collections of several Amsterdam Mennonites. Upon his death, the Mennonite cloth merchant Jan Pietersz Bruyningh (1600-1646) possessed, in addition to the double portrait of himself and his wife by Rembrandt amongst others, no less than eight paintings by Flinck, including biblical histories, landscapes, a *tronie*, and a portrait of a woman, all of them doubtlessly bought through Uylenburgh.<sup>17</sup> The inventory of the deceased Mennonite widow Reijncke Gerrits (d. 1647) mentions, among many works by artists associated with Uylenburgh, such as Rembrandt, Pieter de Neyn (1597-1639), Claes Moyaert (1591-1669) and Dirck Dircksz Santvoort (1609-1680), three works by Flinck, two oval portraits and a *Hunter with a Falcon*.<sup>18</sup> Already mentioned were Flinck's portraits of his cousin Dirck Leeuw and that of Gozen Centen (1611/12-1677), another member of Amsterdam's Mennonite community (figs. 7, 8). As implied by Houbraken, the Mennonite Leeuw family supported their cousin Govert by commissioning portraits and buying his work. Dirck's aforementioned half-brother, the very affluent Mennonite merchant Amel-donck Leeuw and his wife Maeycken Rutgers (c. 1604-1652) possessed an amazing nine works by Flinck, all mentioned in the 1653 division of their estate among their children.<sup>19</sup> In addition to biblical histories, a *tronie* and landscapes, we find portraits by Flinck of several family members, among them that of their son David (1631/32-1703), nowadays recognized to be the *Portrait of a Boy, Probably David Leeuw* (1631/32-1703) in Birmingham, dated 1640 (fig. 11).<sup>20</sup>



Fig. 3  
Rembrandt, *Portrait of Dirck Jansz Pesser*, 1634, oil on panel, 71 x 53 cm., Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (originally oval)



Fig. 4  
Rembrandt, *Portrait of a Man in a Broad-Brimmed Hat*, 1634, oil on panel, 70 x 53.4 cm., Boston, Museum of Fine Arts (originally oval)



Fig. 5 Fig. 3, detail of the face



Fig. 6 Cat. no. 7, detail of the face



Fig. 7  
Govert Flinck, *Portrait of Dirck Jacobsz Leeuw*, 1636, oil on canvas, 64.5 x 47.2 cm., Amsterdam, Museum het Rembrandthuis (on loan from the United Mennonite Congregation, Amsterdam)



Fig. 8  
Govert Flinck, *Portrait of a Young Man, probably Gozen Centen* (1611/12-1677), 1636/37, oil on panel, 65.5 x 51 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 9  
Govert Flinck, *Portrait of a Man, Aged Forty-Four*, 1637, oil on panel, 74.8 x 60 cm., The Hague, Mauritshuis



Fig. 10  
Fig. 9, detail of the face



Fig. 11  
Govert Flinck, *Portrait of a Boy, probably David Leeuw (1631/32-1703)*, 1640, oil on canvas, 129.6 x 102.8 cm., Birmingham, The Barber Institute of Fine Arts

The Mennonites' simplicity and modesty was reflected in their choice of clothing: men generally dressed in black, wore black large-brimmed hats, and simple white collars.<sup>21</sup> As our portrait dates from 1637, when Flinck was deeply involved with Uylenburgh and his Mennonite clientele, and since the sitter of our portrait fits the Mennonite profile, the search for a possible candidate of sitter should logically focus on the Mennonites in the Flinck/Uylenburgh group. Two archival records deserve our attention. The first is that of a male oval portrait by Flinck in the above-mentioned death inventory of Reijncke Gerrits.

#### 'Reijndert Oom'

The two only oval portraits by Flinck – one male, the other female – mentioned in a seventeenth century archival source are found in Amsterdam, in the above-mentioned 1647 death inventory of Reijncke Gerrits.<sup>22</sup> Reijncke and her husband, the shipper Jarich Lubbes (d. 1641/42), were affluent Mennonites, originally from Staveren in Friesland.<sup>23</sup> The paintings in Reijncke's inventory were estimated by Hendrick Uylenburgh. In the 'voorhuis' Uylenburgh describes 'a portrait in oval of Reijndert Oom with an ebony frame by Govert Flinck f. 36' followed by 'a portrait of Atje Jaricx in an oval with an ebony frame by Govert Flinck f. 30'.<sup>24</sup> Atje Jaricx is here identified for the first time as the daughter of Reijncke and Jarich. About 36 years old at the time, she

remained unmarried.<sup>25</sup> The sitter of the male portrait, 'Reijndert Oom', cannot therefore be Atje's husband. Rather, he was Reijncke's brother Reijndert, or Reyner Gerrits. 'Oom', Dutch for uncle, thus refers here to his role as uncle to Atje and her siblings, who would have assisted Uylenburgh with assessing the inventory.<sup>26</sup> Born in Staveren, Reyner is mentioned as a merchant living in Amsterdam as early as 1628.<sup>27</sup> He died in Amsterdam on 14 October 1641.<sup>28</sup>

Could Reyner Gerrits be the sitter of the present oval portrait? In theory that is possible. Reyner's birth date is lacking, but with a certain proviso, one could estimate him to have been born between c. 1580 and c. 1595.<sup>29</sup> If he was born halfway the 1590s, he would be around 42 years old in 1637. This would still be an acceptable age for the sitter of our portrait. However, two other oval male portraits on panel by Flinck qualify as well.<sup>30</sup> The first of these is the already mentioned *Portrait of a Man, Aged Forty-Four* of 1637 in the Mauritshuis (fig. 9). This portrait was once erroneously identified as the Sephardic Rabbi Menasseh Ben Israel (1604-1657), but



Fig. 12 Govert Flinck, *Portrait of a Man with a Broad-Brimmed Hat (possibly Reyner Gerrits)*, 1641, oil on panel, 75.6 x 59 cm., sale London, Christie's, 8 Dec 2009, lot 13

the rabbi's year of birth does not concur with that of the sitter who, following the inscription ('.Ae. 44'), was born c. 1593. As the Mauritshuis sitter's clothing also fits with the Mennonite customs, he could likewise potentially qualify as 'Reijndert Oom'. Still, the chances of the other oval male portrait, dated 1641, are at least as good, or better. This *Portrait of a Man with a Broad-Brimmed Hat* (fig. 12), auctioned in London in 2014, was painted in time to possibly depict Reyner Gerrits, who died in October of that year. Moreover, the sitter's clothing style fits Mennonite customs neatly, and his age, presumably around 50, fits well with Reyner's estimated age. Born c. 1580-1595, he would have been between 46 and 61 years old in 1641. Most intriguingly, the portrait might well be coupled with another oval portrait on panel by Flinck, from the same year 1641 and of the exact same size, which depicts a considerably younger woman. This *Portrait of a Woman* (fig. 13) could quite possibly depict Atje Jaricx, who would have been about 30 at the time.<sup>31</sup> It is this hitherto unnoticed connection that makes for a compelling case.



Fig. 13 Govert Flinck, *Portrait of a Woman (possibly Atje Jaricx)*, 1641, oil on panel, 75 x 59 cm., formerly London, collection C. Fairfax Murray

#### The 'conterfeijtsel van A. Leeuw van G. Flinck'

The second archival record of interest is the 1653 division of the estate of Flinck's Mennonite cousin Ameldonck Jacobsz Leeuw and his wife Maeycken Rutgers.<sup>32</sup> Ameldonck had died in 1647, and after Maeycken's death in 1652, their estate was divided among their children. The document lists the aforementioned nine paintings by Flinck, among them three portraits. Whereas David Leeuw inherited his own portrait ('A portrait of David Leeuw done by Flinck') – as said presumably Flinck's *Portrait of a Boy* in Birmingham (fig. 11) – his older sister Agneta Leeuw (1630-1694) inherited two portraits by Flinck. Listed under her name ('Angeneta Leeuw') we find Flinck's portrait of her cousin Susanna Rutgers (b. 1636) and a portrait more cryptically described as 'Een conterfeijtsel van A. Leeuw van G. Flinck' ('A portrait of A. Leeuw by G. Flinck'). One wonders to whom this refers.<sup>33</sup> Was it Agneta herself, who inherited her own portrait just like her brother David had? Whereas that seems consistent, it should on the other hand be remarked that the other siblings Barbara (1629-1682) and Jacob (1636-1704) did not inherit portraits of themselves, nor are such portraits known, or mentioned anywhere. As a possibly more agreeable alternative, 'A. Leeuw' could in fact refer to Ameldonck Leeuw, the deceased father and head of the family. If this is indeed the case the present work could very well qualify as his portrait.<sup>34</sup> The Mennonite Ameldonck was born in 1604 and would have therefore been 33 years old in 1637, a completely convincing age for our sitter. Moreover, Flinck had painted Ameldonck's younger brother Dirck the previous year, and three years later he painted the portrait of his son, David. If the 'portrait of A. Leeuw' in the 1653 estate division indeed depicted Ameldonck, then this supposed portrait would, given seventeenth century custom, have likely been done before that of his son in 1640, another (hypothetical) argument in favour of identifying the present portrait as possibly that of Ameldonck. Its rather informal character might further add to this hypothesis, that Flinck here – following his portrait of Dirck – portrayed his other cousin, a very close and wealthy family member who was supportive of his career as an artist.<sup>35</sup> While necessarily remaining a hypothesis, it would certainly befit Ameldonck's subsequent role as a collector of Flinck's work if he had his portrait done early on by his talented cousin, as a recognition and token of their mutual bond as 'bloedvrienden'.

JH

## Notes

- ↑ In previous literature the measurements are erroneously given as 63,5 x 54 cm.
- ↑ After the earl's nephew, Robert Marsham Townshend, passed in December 1914, a 12-day sale of the Sydney collection was held at Frognal House, starting on 7 June 1915 (*A catalogue of the Sydney Collection at Frognal*). However, the present portrait is absent from the sale catalogue, as it was separately sold (or given into consignment) to the art dealer Arthur J. Sulley, who sold it, together with several of the best works from the Sydney collection, to Knoedler & Co in New York in July 1915.
- ↑ Listed in Knoedler & Co's New York stock administration (Knoedler Gallery Archive, accessible online: www.getty.edu/research/special\_collections/notable/knoedler.html, Series I.A. Paintings, 1872-1970: Painting stock book 6: 12653-15139, 1911 December-1920 July, fols. 105-106, ‘23 July 1915 [...] 13630 : Govert Flinck, 5945, Port of a Man, 22 ¼ x 28, Oval, P, [L] 500’), the portrait was bought from Sulley & Co, London, as part of the collection of the late Earl Sydney. In February 1916, the Knoedler Gallery sold the painting to Ed. A. Faust in St. Louis, for \$ 5000. See also Knoedler Gallery Archive, Series VII. Photographs, approximately 1890-1971: Flinck, Govert, box 2309, folders 2, 3 (research files), where the Number CA1173 is mentioned. This number corresponds with a number written (twice) on the reverse of the panel, and indicates that the painting was again consigned to Knoedler in or after 1928. Website consulted 30 September 2020.
- ↑ Anna Louise Busch Faust was the daughter of Adolphus Busch (1839-1913), co-founder of the Anheuser-Busch beer brewery, and his wife Elizabeth Lilly Anheuser Busch (1844-1928).
- ↑ According to Von Moltke 1965, who mentions an (unidentified) exhibition in St Louis in 1927, for which the painting was lent by ‘Mr. and Mrs. Ed. A. Faust’. A 1993 appraisal of the portrait cites the supposed exhibition as being held in December 1931. Exhibition(s) or exhibition catalogue(s) not identified.
- ↑ Biography based on A. Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, 3 vols., Amsterdam 1718-1721, 2 (1719), pp. 18-27; E. Kok, *Culturele ondernemers in de Gouden Eeuw : de artistieke en sociaal-economische strategieën van Jacob Backer, Govert Flinck, Ferdinand Bol en Joachim van Sandrart*, diss. Universiteit van Amsterdam 2013, pp. 43-78; T. van der Molen, ‘The Life of Govert Flinck’, in: E. J. Goossens et al., *Govert Flinck : Reflecting History*, exh. cat. Cleves, Museum Kurhaus Kleve - Ewald Mataré Sammlung 2015-2016, pp. 10-21; J. Hillegers, ‘The Lambert years: Govert Flinck in Leeuwarden ca. 1629-ca. 1633’, in: S. Dickey (ed.), *Ferdinand Bol and Govert Flinck : New Research*, Zwolle 2017, pp. 44-65.
- ↑ For a detailed account of Flinck and the Leeuw family, see M. van Eikema Hommes et al., ‘The Hidden Youth of Dirck Jacobsz Leeuw: A Portrait by Govert Flinck Revealed’, in: *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 64/1 (2016), pp. 4-61, with an ‘Edited Genealogy of the Leeuw Family’ as an appendix.
- ↑ D. de Witt, A.K. Wheelock Jr. ‘Portrait of Antonie Coopal’ (2017), in: A.K. Wheelock Jr., L. Yeager-Crasselt (eds.), *The Leiden Collection Catalogue*, 3rd ed. New York, 2020 (https://theleidencollection.com/artwork/portrait-of-antonie-coopal/, accessed September 2021).
- ↑ J. von Sandrart, *Teutsche Academie der edlen Bau-, Bild- und Mahlerey-Künste*, 3 vols., Nuremberg, 1675-1680, II/3, p. 319. J. van der Veen, ‘Het kunstbedrijf van Hendrick Uylenburgh in Amsterdam. Productie en handel tussen 1625 en 1655’, in: F. Lammerlse, J. van der Veen, *Uylenburgh @ 200n : Kunst en commercie van Rembrandt tot De Lairesse 1625-1675*, exh. cat. London, Dulwich Picture Gallery, Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis 2006, pp. 116-205, pp. 160ff, suggests a working relationship until c. 1638. Van der Molen 2015, pp. 14-15 suggests a longer stay, until possibly 1644.
- ↑ See S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, ‘Het ‘Schilderhuis’ van Govert Flinck en de kunsthandel van Uylenburg aan de Lauriergracht te Amsterdam’, in: *Jaarboek Amstelodamum* 74 (1982), pp. 70-90. It was long assumed that Dirck Jacobsz Flinck died in 1652, but this is incorrect, as he was documented as a witness at the intended marriage of his niece in Weesp in 1664. See Van Eikema Hommes et al. 2016, pp. 8, 53, note 30.

- ↑ Dudok van Heel 1980, p. 110. Flinck's cousin and neighbour Dirck Leeuw had already been baptized Remonstrant in 1639.
- ↑ During the preparation of the exhibition its curators approached the St Louis Art Museum about the whereabouts of the portrait in order to arrange for a possible loan, but their quest remained unsuccessful as they were unable to locate the work. Oral communication Dr. David de Witt, curator of the Rembrandthuis, 2021.
- ↑ Van Eikema Hommes et al. 2016, p. 32.
- ↑ E. van de Wetering, in: J. Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, 6 vols, Dordrecht etc. 1982-2014, 6 (*Rembrandt's Paintings revisited – A complete survey*, 2014), cat. nos. 92, 115, 117a, 118a, 123a, 133a.
- ↑ For the portrait of Dirck Jacobsz Leeuw, see esp. Van Eikema Hommes et al. 2016. Although dated 1636, the portrait as we see it today is the result of a drastic over-painting by Flinck, probably done c. 1647. For the portrait of Gozen Centen, see I.H. van Eeghen, ‘Ongrijpbare jeugd. Bij een portret door Govert Flinck’, In: *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 25/2 (1977), pp. 55-59. The portrait's identification follows from a 1837 report listing paintings at the Amsterdam Rijpenhofje, descending from Mennonite inheritance.
- ↑ On the portrait, see B. Broos, in: B. Broos, A. Van Suchtelen, *Portraits in the Mauritsshuis 1430-1790*, Zwolle 2004, pp. 89-91, cat. no. 17, who in relation to Rembrandt's portraits rightly remarks that ‘Flinck is far less confident and varied, and the modeling [is] fairly flat.’
- ↑ In addition, Bruyningh's inventory mentions a landscape after Flinck. For the inventory, see S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, ‘Doopsgezinden en schilderkunst in de 17e eeuw – Leerlingen, opdrachtgevers en verzamelaars van Rembrandt’, in: *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen : nieuwe reeks* 6 (1980), pp. 105-123, pp. 112, 117-119. Rembrandt's double portrait of Bruyningh and his wife Hillegont Pietersdr Moutmaker can be identified with the work stolen from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, in 1990. See I.H. van Eeghen, ‘Drie portretten van Rembrandt (Bruyningh, Cater en Moutmaker), Vondel en Blaeu’, in: *Jaarboek Amstelodamum* 69 (1977), pp. 55-72, esp. pp. 66-72; S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, ‘Rembrandt als portretschilder bij Hendrick Uylenburgh, 1631 – 1635, met opdrachten in Den Haag, Leiden en Rotterdam’, in: *Maandblad Amstelodamum* 107/2 (2020), pp. 56-91, pp. 65-68, fig. 14.
- ↑ Stadsarchief Amsterdam (SAA), NA, not. L. Lamberti, inv. 570, fol. 257-270. See also Montias Database (https://research.frick.org/montias), inv. 234. Judging from the paintings in the inventory, Reijncke and her family were clients of Uylenburgh. See for a discussion about this Van der Veen 2006, p. 171. Undated, the inventory must be from after 4 August 1647, as Reijncke Gerrits was buried on that day (see below, note 22) and the inventory mentions her passing (p. 257). I wish to thank Dr. Bas Dudok van Heel, Dr. Piet Bakker and Dr. Angela Jager for their kind assistance with transcription.
- ↑ SAA, access no. 88 (inv. Familie Brants en Aanverwante Families), 2.3.2.1, Amelondonck Leeuw/Maria Rutgers, 809. See also Dudok van Heel 1980, pp. 119-121; Van der Veen 2006, pp. 174-175.
- ↑ First identified by Dudok van Heel 1980, p. 121. See further M. Goverde [etc.], R. Wenley, ‘Finding an identity: Govert Flinck's Portrait of a Boy (1640) in the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham’, in: Dickey 2017, pp. 132-139.
- ↑ See for an insightful and revealing analysis on the Mennonite dress code, in relation to Flinck's portrait of his cousin Dirck Leeuw, Van Eikema Hommes et al. 2016, esp. pp. 27-42.
- ↑ See above, note 18. Reijncke Gerrits was carried to her grave in Amsterdam's Oudezijdskapel (a.k.a. St Olof's chapel) on 4 August 1647, from her house at the Waels Borghwal (now Oude Waal). See SAA, DTB Burial (5001), inv. 1062 (OZK), fol. 69, 4 August 1647. ‘Rinck Gerrits [buried] vande Wael’.
- ↑ See J. de Vries, ‘Zeventiende-eeuwse Staversen, naar aanleiding van het inventariseren van de grafschriften in de Nicolaaskerk’, in: *Genealogysk Jierboek* 2011, pp. 7-124, esp. pp. 19, 105-111. Reijncke Gerrits was the daughter of Gerrit Reynersz Roovries, a shipowner and owner of a rope-making factory (‘lijnbaan’) in Staveren. Her siblings

- ↑ were Anne Gerrits Touslager (d. 1656), Thomas Gerrits Touslager (d. c. 1642), a burgomaster of Staveren from 1612 onwards, Evert Gerrits Moutmaecker (d. after 1648), and Reyner Gerrits Touslager (d. 1641). While a transport deed dated 25 June 1641 (SAA, NA, not. L. Lamberti, inv. 601, no. 274056, fol. 133-134) includes the names of Reijncke, Reyner, and Jarich Lubbes, Reijncke is mentioned as Jarich's widow on 10 January 1642 (De Vries 2011, p. 109). On Reijncke and Jarich's Mennonite orientation, see Van der Veen 2006, p. 171.
- ↑ SAA, NA, not. L. Lamberti, inv. 570, fol. 257-270, p. 268: ‘Schilderijen getaxeert bij Hendrick Uijlenburch – int voorhuijs [...] Een conterfeijtsel in een ovael van Reijndert oom met een ebben lyst van Govert Flinck 36 --.--. / Een contrefejtsel van Atje Jaricx in een ovael met een ebben lijst van Govert Flinck 30:--:--.'. Flinck's two oval portraits, hanging in the ‘voorhuis’, have so far remained unidentified. The inventory, though, is rather specific about them.
- ↑ Atje is again mentioned, together with her siblings, in the settlement agreement of 11 May 1648, there as a ‘jongedochter’. See SAA, NA, not. L. Lamberti, inv. 603, fol. 387-393, fol. 387. Less than a month later, on 4 June 1648, Atje married her warden Gerrit Symonsz Elscamp (her representative in the settlement statement). From their prenuptial we learn that she was 37 years old at the time, implying her birth year to be c. 1611. See SAA, DTB Marriage (5001), inv. 679, fol. 225. Atje was taken to be buried from her house at Oude Waal on 4 December 1657. See SAA, DTB Burial (5001), inv. 1063, fol. 12.
- ↑ De Vries 2011, p. 107, mentions Foeckien Jarichsdr (c. 1614-1661) and Lubbe Jarichsz as the children of Jarich Lubbes and Reijncke Gerrits. They are all mentioned in the 1648 settlement statement.
- ↑ De Vries 2011, p. 109, who lists him as Reyner Gerritsz Touslager.
- ↑ In 1638 he and his sister Reijncke are the two buyers of the house at Oude Waal (see SAA, arch. no. 5062, inv. 36, fol. 157v, 14 May 1638), from where Reijncke was buried in 1647. It is, in fact, the same house from where Reyner himself was carried to his grave in the Oudezijdskapel. See SAA, DTB Burial (5001), inv. 1062 (OZK), fol. 50, 17 October 1641, ‘Reijndert Gerritsz [buried] vande Wael’). Upon his death he was director of the ‘lijnbaan’ in Staveren, and married to Goyck Thomas, who remained in Staveren where she died in December 1667. The couple had three children (De Vries 2011, pp. 109-110).
- ↑ Reyner's older brother Thomas is documented as a shipper in 1598, suggesting his date of birth in or prior to 1578 (De Vries 2011, p. 106). Atje, the daughter of Reyner's sister Reijncke, was born c. 1611 (see above, note 25), while Reijncke's husband Jarich is mentioned as a shipper in 1605 (De Vries 2011, p. 107), suggesting Reijncke's year of birth to be around 1580-1590. Reyner and Reijncke were presumably rather close, both age-wise, economically and socially, judging from their co-ownership of the house at Oude Waal (see above, note 28), the oval portraits of Reyner and Reijncke's daughter Atje hanging there alongside each other, and their joint business interests (see above, note 23). Reyner's widow lived until 1667, and a daughter Holck married in 1642 (De Vries 2011, p. 110).
- ↑ A third oval male portrait by Flinck datable to the later 1630s, now in Dublin (*Portrait of a Young Man*, c. 1638/39, oil on panel, 74.8 x 60 cm., Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland; see Von Moltke 1965, cat. no. 254), seems an unlikely candidate. Not only does the sitter seem far too young, his clothing style is too opulent for a Mennonite post-baptism portrait.
- ↑ This female portrait was once erroneously identified as the pendant of the Mauritsshuis portrait. See Von Moltke 1965, cat. no. 338; Broos 2004, p. 91, note 14. Going down this route, the young lady was – again erroneously – thought to be the wife of Menasseh Ben Israel. The two portraits differ significantly in size and are painted four years apart. The match with the *Portrait of a man with a Broad-Brimmed Hat*, however, has not been made until now. While matching neatly in size, year and composition, the curtain in the female portrait is opened, whereas the curtain in the male portrait remains closed. This might suggest that the works did belong together, but not as husband and wife.

- ↑ See above, note 19.

↑ The specific notation is remarkable for two reasons. If the portrait depicted Agneta, one would expect her name to have been written in full (e.g. her brother David in the same document). The sole A. seems much more likely to refer to an adult. At the same time, if the portrait depicted the father, it would have been more usual if the eldest son (i.e. David Leeuw) inherited it. This latter issue could be explained by the fact that up to this point there was no significant portrait tradition in the family. I thank Bas Dudok van Heel and Piet Bakker for their insights.

↑ To qualify as Flinck's possible portrait of Ameltonck, a portrait should be painted before or in 1647, when Amelock died; the sitter should be age appropriate with Ameltonck's life dates (1604-1647); his clothing should comply with Mennonite customs; and the portrait should have no pendant (as no pendant is mentioned in the 1653 estate division). On this basis, the only credible alternative seems to be Flinck's *Portrait of a Man*, dated 163[.] in the Mauritsshuis (Von Moltke 1965, cat. no. 264; Broos/Van Suchtelen 2004, cat. no. 696), which matches the qualifications (although its relatively lacklustre execution seems less fitting to the importance of Ameltonck to Flinck).

↑ We don't know precisely at which point Ameltonck started collecting Flinck's work. Presumably it was during the second half of the 1630s, after Flinck had replaced Rembrandt as Uylenburgh's *chef d' atelier*, and his brother Dirck had his portrait done by Flinck. The two landscapes by Flinck and the *tronie* of the old man in the 1653 estate division could certainly date from this period.

**Jan van Goyen**

Leiden 1596 – 1656 The Hague

*Riverscape*

Signed and dated lower centre on the boat: VG 1651

Oil on panel

37.5 x 34.5 cm.

**Provenance:**

Sale Paris, M. Cocteau, 1 December 1910, lot 23, fr. 8000 to Féral

Paris, collection W. Gordon-Bennett, 1911.<sup>1</sup>

London, Duits Gallery, 1948

Thaxted, Essex, collection J. Hingston

London, Duits Gallery, 1954

London, Gallery Dr. W. Katz, 1960

London, collection Mrs. Francis Hock

**Literature:**

N.N., *Exposition des grands et petits maîtres hollandais du XVIIe siècle*, exh. cat. Paris, Salle du Jeu de Paume (Jardin des Tuileries) 1911, cat. no. 41

A. Dayot, *Grands et petits maîtres hollandais du XVIIe siècle à l'exposition à Paris 1911*, Paris 1912, p. 124, cat. no. 43, ill.

C. Hofstede de Groot, *Beschreibendes und kritisches Verzeichnis der Werke der hervorragendsten holländischen Maler des XVII Jahrhunderts*, 10 vols., Esslingen 1907-1928, 8 (1923), p. 209, cat. no. 851 (as on canvas, 40 x 33 cm.) (English ed., London 1927, p. 215)

H.-U. Beck, *Jan van Goyen 1596-1656 : ein Oeuvreverzeichnis*, 4 vols., Amsterdam/ Doornspijk 1972-1991, 2 (1973), p. 93, cat. no. 191, ill.

**Exhibited:**

*Exposition des grands et petits maîtres hollandais du XVIIe siècle*, Paris, Salle du Jeu de Paume (Jardin des Tuileries), 1911, no. 41



Widely considered today as one of the seminal pioneering forces in Dutch seventeenth century landscape painting, Jan van Goyen grew up under less than favourable conditions.<sup>2</sup> His father, the Leiden cobbler Joseph Jansz van Goyen, suffered from fits, to the point that his wife Geertgen Dirckx van Eyck had him confined to the city's asylum in 1609. Yet, from Van Goyen's biography by Leiden burgomaster Jan Jansz Orlers, we also know that his father was a 'lover of the arts of drawing and painting' who encouraged his son to study the arts, and – at the tender age of ten – apprenticed him to the then well-known landscape painter Coenraet van Schilperoord (c. 1577-1636).<sup>3</sup> After studying with him for three months, Van Goyen was sent to former burgomaster Isaac Nicolai van Swanenburgh (1537-1614), then the city's most renowned painter. With him, too, Van Goyen spent only a short period, after which he was further taught by the otherwise little known painter Jan Arentsz de Man (c. 1565-1625). As his father apparently wished for his son to become a glass painter, he took Jan to a certain Hendrick Clock. Jan, though, had no propensity at all towards that profession, so his father then curiously picked the unknown painter Willem Gerritsz (before 1582-in or after 1628) in far-away Hoorn as his son's master. Jan remained in Hoorn for two years. Back in Leiden, he practised the art of painting by himself, and, at the age of nineteen, travelled to France for a year. Upon his return, his father recognised his son's progress and ambition, and in around 1617/18 he once more sent him to a master in another city, the excellent Esaias van de Velde (1587-1630) in Haarlem, with whom Van Goyen stayed for a year. In Haarlem, Van Goyen became acquainted with the latest developments in the rendering of naturalistic landscape. In addition to Van de Velde, the encounter with artists such as Willem Buytewech (1591/92-1624) and Jan van de Velde (1593-1641) struck a decisive chord with Van Goyen, whose earliest works in particular are much indebted to the efforts of these Haarlem realists.

In 1618 Van Goyen was back in Leiden, where he married Anna Willemsdr van Raelst. A few years later, in 1622 they bought a house in the Zonneveldsteeg (now Zonneveldstraat). After 1626/27 Van Goyen exchanged Van de Velde's style for a more monochromatic approach and – competing with painters such as Pieter de Molijn (1595-1661), Pieter van Santvoort (1604/05-1635) and Salomon van Ruysdael (1600/03-1670) – started to choose stretched diagonal compositions over richly staffaged village landscapes. In 1631 Van Goyen and his family moved to The Hague, where in 1638 he became the dean of the Guild of St Luke. In 1639, he purchased a house in the Singelgracht (now No. 16 Bierkade). During the 1630s, Van Goyen established himself as the market leader in the land-



Fig. 1 Jan van Goyen, *A River Estuary with "Smalschips" and Fishermen*, dated 1651, oil on panel, 35.5 x 33.2 cm., Madrid, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza

scape genre.<sup>4</sup> His quick, virtuoso and monochrome technique enabled him to produce prolifically (he produced an estimated 1200 works during his career), while maintaining an admirably high artistic quality. Due to his large production, he was able to sell at affordable prices, a potentially profitable business model. Yet financially Van Goyen wasn't very successful. Suffering from his many competitors and imitators, he tried his luck at art dealing, appraising and auctioneering, but experienced great losses during tulip mania. Partially as a result of poor speculating on the house market, he was unable to pay his debts. Towards the end of his life, in 1652 and 1654, he twice had to auction his possessions. Despite his efforts, the many debts at his death in April 1656 forced his widow to organise a sale of all his possessions again. Van Goyen's two daughters Maria and Margaretha were, in the same year of 1649, married to the painter Jacques de Claeuw (1623-1694) and Jan Steen (1626-1679), respectively.

In this upright composition depicting an estuary, four fifths of the scene are devoted to the great clouds in a blue sky. The foreground features three figures in a fishing boat, two of whom are hauling their net out of the water, while a third man moors their boat to a pile in the water. Beyond a sailing vessel is sailing away, towards the city in the background. Van Goyen used a rapid technique that was developed concurrently by Esaias van de Velde and Jan Porcellis around 1615 – during the period of Van Goyen's apprenticeship and early independence. This manner of painting, in which only a few colours were applied with loose brushstrokes in one layer onto a thin ground, made a large production possible and lowered the cost of materials as well. The appearance of the wood grain through the paint in his work is deliberate, because he chose to use a transparent ground based on glass.<sup>5</sup>

A similar painting by Jan van Goyen is in the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, *A River Estuary with "Smalschips" and Fishermen*, also dated 1651, and even the sizes almost correspond (fig. 1). On the museum's website Peter C. Sutton makes reference to the present painting 'with a very similar composition', as in the collection of Mrs. Francis Hock.<sup>6</sup>

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#### Notes

- 1 According to Dayot 1912, p. 124, cat. no. 43, our painting belonged to Eugène Max, Paris. The caption underneath the image of our work in Dayot's publication, though, mentions as the owner W. Gordon-Bennett, the same owner also mentioned in the 1911 catalogue. Since Dayot also mixed up the support of our work (canvas instead of panel), he was arguably likewise mistaken about Eugène Max, who in fact did own the previous lot 40 (Van Goyen).
- 2 Biography based on H.-U. Beck, in: J. Turner (ed.), *The Dictionary of Art*, 34 vols., New York 1996, 13, pp. 255-258; C. Vogelaar, 'Inleiding', in: C. Vogelaar et al., *Jan van Goyen*, exh. cat. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal 1996-1997, pp. 10-21.
- 3 J.J. Orlers, *Beschrijvinge der Stadt Leyden: Inhoudende 't Begin, den voortgang, ende den wasdom der selver*, Leiden 1641, pp. 373-374.
- 4 See E.J. Sluiter, 'Jan van Goyen als marktleider, virtuoos en vernieuwer', in: Leiden 1996-1997, pp. 38-59.
- 5 E. Melanie Gifford, in: Leiden 1996-1997, p. 81.
- 6 See: <https://www.museothyssen.org/en/collection/artists/goyen-jan-josephsz-van/river-estuary-smalschips-and-fishermen> (website consulted April 2022).

**Jacob Jordaens**

1593 – Antwerp – 1678

*Portrait of an Old Man in Contemplation*Oil on canvas  
54.5 x 48.2 cm.**Provenance**Toulouse, private collection  
USA, private collection**Literature**

Unpublished

Little need be said about the formidable reputation of Jacob Jordaens. Already widely recognised as being amongst the most talented and original artists of the 1610s, he worked with Sir Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) as an independent collaborator, providing assistance with the latter's many commissions, mostly for the public domain. Jordaens' position as the third of the 'Big Three' of the Flemish school of painting, alongside Rubens and his greatest pupil Sir Anthony Van Dyck (1599–1641), was cemented in the 1620s. He set up his own imposing studio, and achieved huge international success, both artistically and commercially. Although deeply rooted in the art of Rubens, Jordaens was no mere adaptor of the pictorial idiom of his role model who was sixteen years his senior. Even more than Rubens – and certainly more than Van Dyck – Jordaens from early on developed a distinctive preference for physicality, volume and palpability, for cropped compositions, for exuberance, caricature and the grotesque. After Rubens and van Dyck died in quick succession in the early 1640s, Jordaens remained the sole heir to the painter's throne of honour of Antwerp, a position he indisputedly held until his death in 1678.

The fluent brushstrokes of Jordaens' oil sketches, executed during the preparatory phase preceding the final painting, showcase his painterly virtuosity. The present rediscovered and hitherto unpublished work is a rare surviving example of his early period and can likely be dated to circa 1620 or slightly earlier, comparable to his other youthful works from this period, such as *Job* in the Detroit Institute of Arts (fig. 1).



Fig 1.  
Jacob Jordaens, *Job*, oil  
on panel, 67 x 52.1 cm.,  
Detroit, Detroit Institute  
of Arts

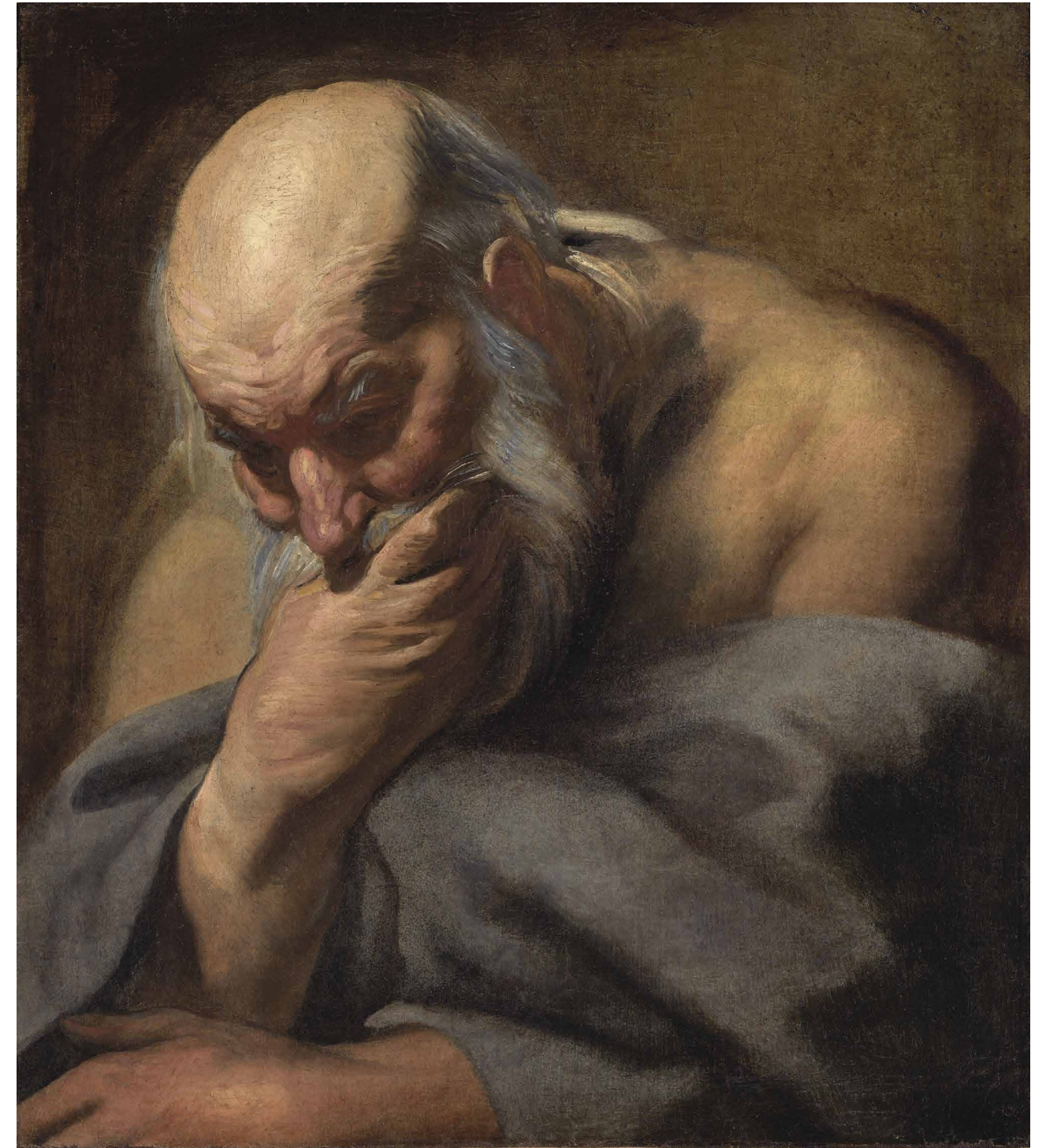




Fig. 2 Jacob Jordaens, *The Four Evangelists*, oil on canvas, 134 x 118 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre

Undoubtedly painted from life, these spontaneous and rapidly executed paintings lie somewhere between informal studies and finished paintings, portraying members of Jordaens' own circle and providing the artist with a cast of real-life characters from which he could draw for larger group portraits.

Here, Jordaens has observed an old, bearded man in a state of contemplation. With his upper body partly covered by a blue cloak, he paints the weathered face and hands with raw realism, using short brushstrokes to build up the flesh tones from light to dark. These complement the broader gestures of bold and expressive brushstrokes, showing the same spontaneity with which Jordaens would later paint his *Four Evangelists* in the Musée du Louvre, Paris (fig. 2).



Fig. 3 Jacob Jordaens, *The Holy Family with Saint Anne and the Young Baptist and His Parents*, oil on panel, 169.9 x 149.9 cm., New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art

It seems that Jordaens also employed the model of the present figure for Saint Joseph in his *Holy Family* of circa 1617/18 in the Saint Gilles Town Hall, Brussels, which he treated in two further panels, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (fig. 3) and in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich.

SL



Detail of cat. no. 8



**Pieter Lastman**

1583 – Amsterdam – 1633

*Christ and the Samaritan Woman at the Well*

Signed middle right: PLastman fe / 1621 (PL in ligature)

Oil on panel

49.5 x 76 cm.

**Copy:**

Oil on panel, 66 x 76 cm., sale Vienna, Dorotheum, 6 October 1999, lot 273 (as attrib. to Pieter Lastman)

**Provenance:**Amsterdam, 7 July 1632, inventory of Pieter Lastman: 'In the back room [...] the woman at the well by the same [Pieter Lastman] both in an ebony frame'<sup>1</sup>

Amsterdam, collection of Pieter Lastman's brother Segher Pietersz (1579-after 1650), by descent

Amsterdam, 14 February 1664, inventory of the latter's daughter Clementia Segers, widow of Dirck Vennekool: 'a ditto being a Samaritan woman by Lastman'<sup>2</sup>Amsterdam, taxation on behalf of Maria Sautijn (1671-1748), widow of Joan Blaeu (1650-1712), 31 December 1712-7 February 1713: 'Samaritan woman by the same [Lastman] 15'<sup>3</sup>

Sale Monaco, Christie's, 15 June 1990, lot 23 (as dated 1623)

France, private collection until 2020

**Literature:**A. Bredius, N. de Roever, 'Pieter Lastman en François Venant', in: *Oud-Holland* 4 (1886), pp. 1-23, p. 16K. Freise, *Pieter Lastman : sein Leben und seine Kunst : ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Holländ. Malerei im XVII. Jahrh.*, Leipzig 1911, p. 20, no. 38, p. 58, cat. no. 63/63aS.A.C. Dudok van Heel, 'De familie van de schilder Pieter Lastman (1583-1633)', in: *Jaarboek Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie* 45 (1991), pp. 110-132, p. 118S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, 'Pieter Lastman (1583-1633) : Een schilder in de Sint Anthonisbreestraat', in: *De Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis* 1991/2, pp. 2-15, p. 13S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, 'Pieter Lastman (1583-1633) : Een schilder in de Sint Anthonisbreestraat', in: *De Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis* 1991/2, pp. 2-15, p. 13S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, *De jonge Rembrandt onder tijdgenoten*, Nijmegen 2006, pp. 101, 109C.T. Seifert, *Pieter Lastman : Studien zu Leben und Werk : Mit einem kritischen Verzeichnis der Werke mit Themen aus der antiken Mythologie und Historie*, Petersberg 2011, pp. 57, 59, fig. 43, (as dated 1623), p. 316, no. 199

### Pieter Lastman

Pieter Lastman's family was originally from Leiden, yet by 1548 his grandfather Pieter Seghers (d. 1578) had moved to Amsterdam, where he registered as a 'poorter' (citizen).<sup>4</sup> The earliest we hear of Lastman himself is in 1588, when his father, the former envoy of the Amsterdam Orphan's chamber Pieter Seghers (1548-c. 1602), sealed a bond on behalf of his then five-year-old son. From this document Lastman's year of birth can be deduced as 1583.<sup>5</sup> The Catholic Pieter Seghers and his wife, the sworn appraiser Barbara Jacobsdr (1549-1624), lived south of Amsterdam's Oude Kerk, in the Sint Jansstraat, in the house 'de oitmoedigen Coninck' ('the humble King'). They had six children. At the time the neighbourhood housed many painters and artisans, and this artistic environment might well have contributed to the career and life choices of the siblings: Pieter's older brother Segher Pietersz Coninck (1578-1650) was a prominent gold and silversmith; Pieter himself became the leading history painter of his generation; his younger brother Claes Pietersz Lastman (1586-1625) also produced paintings, as well as engravings; and his sister Agnieta Pietersdr (1595-1631) married the painter François Venant (1590-1636).

According to Karel van Mander (1548-1606) in his *Schilder-Boeck*, Lastman studied with the Mannerist history and portrait painter Gerrit Pietersz (1566-1612), a former student of Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem (1562-1638), and the younger brother of the famous composer and Amsterdam organist Jan Pietersz Sweelinck (1562-1621). Before establishing himself as a master painter in Amsterdam, Gerrit Pietersz had visited Italy, and in around 1603 Lastman followed his teacher's example. Lastman's drawing after Paolo Veronese's (1528-1588) *Adoration of the Shepherds* in the church of SS Giovanni e Paolo in Venice indicates his presence there, probably in around 1603. However, Lastman's goal was to travel to Rome (and possibly Naples<sup>6</sup>) where he befriended other aspiring artists such as Adam Elsheimer (1578-1610) from Frankfurt, Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) from Antwerp and his peer and fellow Amsterdam townsman Jan Pynas (1581/82-1631), this latter probably his travel companion. Together they made drawings of Rome's ruins and the countryside, and eagerly studied the work of Italian predecessors such as Raphael (1483-1520), Michelangelo (1475-1564) and Caravaggio (1571-1610).

At the latest in March 1607 Lastman was back in Amsterdam, where we find him among the buyers at the sale of the painter Gillis van Coninxloo (1544-1606). In 1608 he moved with his mother, brother and sister to a large house in the Breestraat (opposite the Zuiderkerk, completed in

1614), with a comfortable studio facing north. There he established himself as an ambitious, innovative history painter, and started producing erudite, colourful works, clear in narrative, filled with medium-size figures and accurate detail, in a monumental style reminiscent of Elsheimer's, but bolder in execution. As the Breestraat rapidly became the epicentre of Amsterdam's booming art scene, Lastman accordingly gained his reputation as the most prominent among the Amsterdam history painters (sometimes anachronistically called the 'Pre-Rembrandtists'). During the next 23 years a steady flow of paintings – almost invariably on panel – left the Breestraat workshop. Lastman's extant painted oeuvre numbers about 90 autograph works, plus several compositions known through copies, prints and drawings; however, archival sources document a considerable number of currently unknown works as well. Over 75% of the extant paintings depict religious subjects: 36 render Old Testament, and 37 New Testament themes. In addition, Lastman painted mythological subjects, themes from ancient history, Arcadian landscapes with shepherds and even religious allegories. As one might expect, Lastman took on pupils. Although undocumented, we might suspect some of the younger Amsterdam history painters, such as Lastman's brother-in-law Venant, and fellow Catholic Claes Moyaert (1591-1669), who both worked in a Lastman-*esque* style, to have been active at some point in Lastman's studio, be it as assistants or pupils. Still, two of Lastman's most famous pupils came from his grandfather's hometown, Leiden. In around 1619-1621 the child prodigy Jan Lievens (1607-1674) was taught by Lastman, followed, in around 1625, by Rembrandt (1606-1669). Whereas Lievens stayed with Lastman for two full years, Rembrandt spent only six months with him; a decisive period, nonetheless.

Lastman never married, although a court case of 1615 dealing with his unfulfilled marital commitment to Hillegont Adriaensdr Bredero, the sister of the poet Gerbrand Adriaensz Bredero (1585-1618) indicates he initially had plans to do so. His broken promise had no doubt to do with Hillegont being protestant.<sup>7</sup> Lastman's later years seem to have been a struggle, as is also indicated by a gradually declining production. Soon after his mother's passing, his younger brother Claes unexpectedly died as well. Following illnesses in 1628 and 1629 Lastman twice stated his will, but recovered. In 1631 – the year of his last dated painting – his sister Agnieta died, and Lastman fell ill again. He subsequently moved back to his house of birth, 'de oitmoedigen Coninck' where he passed away in 1633. Lastman's inventory – including many paintings by himself and others – shows him to have been affluent.

### Christ and the Samaritan Woman at the Well

In 1621, the year in which the present painting was executed, Lastman was at the height of his career. In previous years he had produced masterpieces such as *Paul and Barnabas at Lystra* (1617) now in the Amsterdam Museum, *David Making Music in the Temple* (1618) in Braunschweig, *David and Uriah* (1619) in the Leiden Collection, New York (fig. 1), and the *Baptism of the Eunuch* (1620) in Munich.<sup>8</sup> In our monumental picture – one of three works known from 1621<sup>9</sup> – Lastman depicts a subject of Christ's early ministry, as recounted in the Gospel of John 4: 4-26. Travelling from Judea to Galilee, Christ passes through the town of Sychar. Being tired, he sits down beside the old well that Jacob once built there:

*'When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans). Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?" Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*



Fig. 1 Pieter Lastman, *David and Uriah*, 1618, oil on panel, 42.8 x 63.3 cm., New York, The Leiden Collection

While the conversation between Christ and the woman continues, this passage encapsulates the story's message: the well and the water it holds are the metaphor for life, eternity and faith. By giving Christ what he asks of her – her devotion to God – Christ promises her eternal life. Moreover, Christ does not distinguish between Jews, Samaritans or any other race or colour, a message at the core of Christian belief. Lastman situates the theme in a hilly Levantine landscape with a bright view onto the far distant hills. Central to the picture is the classicised figure of Christ on the right, seen sitting on a ledge beside the well, against the background of the pulley and foliage. A handsome figure of idealised monumentality, he is dressed in a simple purple tunic and a grand red cloak. While emphatically leaning his imposing right hand on the ledge of the well, with an elegant, rhetorical hand gesture he points his left index finger at the Samaritan woman. She – a farmhand – stands before him in a rather matter of fact manner, her skirt tied up around her waist, holding a jug in her right hand, and pointing to the well whilst asking Christ with slight disbelief, 'Where can you get this living water?' In the left background the apostles can be seen returning from Sychar, in the distance.

### Lastman looks at Michelangelo

By 1621 the pictorial tradition of the subject was well established. In Italy, masters such as Jacopo Tintoretto (1518-1594) and Paolo Veronese (1528-1588) from Venice, as well as Annibale Carracci (1560-1609) in Bologna, had painted the subject. In prints, its depiction predominantly dated back to early sixteenth century Northern masters such as Lucas Cranach (1472-1553), Lucas van Leyden (1494-1533) and Hans Sebald Beham (c. 1500-1550). Late sixteenth century Northern artists such as Hendrick Goltzius (1558-1617) and Maerten de Vos (1532-1603) likewise produced prints of the theme.<sup>10</sup> An engraving after a design by the latter might well have caught Lastman's attention, for in it we recognise the rare motif of Christ's hand leaning on the ledge of the well (fig. 2). Otherwise, he relied on the Italian example of Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), whose rendering of the subject is known from an engraving by Nicolas Beatrizet (1501-1565) (fig. 3). The composition of the engraving superficially matches Lastman's, yet the most engaging similarity is found in the figure of Christ, whose pose and features present a prime example of Italian High Renaissance idealism (fig. 4, 5). While Beatrizet's print was his prime source, Lastman – having worked in Rome for years – was surely aware that Christ's pose essentially repeated Michelangelo's own *Moses* sculpture of c. 1513/15, conceived for the tomb of Pope Julius II (1443-1513) in the church of San Pietro in Vincoli (fig. 6). Described by



Fig. 2  
Adriaen Collaert after Jan-Baptist Barbé after Maerten de Vos, *Christ and the Samaritan Woman at the Well*, c. 1580/90, engraving, 8.5 x 6.6 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 4 Detail of fig. 3



Fig. 5 Detail of cat. no. 10



Fig. 3  
Nicholas Beatrizet after Michelangelo, *Christ and the Samaritan Woman at the Well*, c. 1550/65, etching and engraving, 39 x 28.8 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 6  
Michelangelo, *Moses*, c. 1513/15, marble sculpture, 235 x 210 cm., Rome, San Pietro in Vincoli



Fig. 7  
Detail of fig. 1 (in reverse)



Fig. 8 Detail of cat. no. 10



Fig. 9 Detail of fig. 6



Fig. 10 Michelangelo, *The Creation of Adam*, c. 1512, fresco, 280 x 570 cm., Rome, Sistine Chapel, detail of the hands

Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) as 'unequaled by any modern or ancient work', Lastman doubtlessly admired it *in situ* and might well have brought drawings of it back to Amsterdam. If not, he could easily rely on prints, such as those by Cornelis Bos (1506/10-1555) or Jacob Matham (1571-1631). That Lastman had already adopted Michelangelo's *Moses* into his repertoire prior to 1621, is demonstrated by the figure of King David in his *David and Uriah* of 1619 (fig. 7).

As for the eloquent hand gesture of Lastman's Christ (fig. 8), this can likewise be traced to Michelangelo. Not only does it quote the hand of the *Moses* (fig. 9), it also recalls the iconic image of God's and Adam's fingers nearly touching in mid-air in Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* fresco on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel (fig. 10).<sup>11</sup> That Lastman had already noticed the rhetorical eloquence of the hand gesture follows from his *The Angel with Manoah and His Wife* of 1617, a painting that likewise deals with the encounter between humans and the divine.<sup>12</sup> Seen in reverse, its composition offers a striking blueprint for the present work (figs. 11, 12). By adopting Michelangelo's hand gesture in the present work, Lastman might have wanted to allude to its theological significance as well. After

all, there is a clear typological parallel between God giving life to Adam in the Old Testament (Gen. 2:7) and Christ offering eternal life to humanity (represented by the Samaritan woman) in the New Testament, thus essentially reconciling Adam's original sin.<sup>13</sup> From that perspective, Christ's equally eye-catching right hand, leaning so firmly on the well (the metaphorical 'spring of water welling up to eternal life', John 4: 13), might further articulate his seminal role as humanity's redeemer, the core of the Biblical narrative depicted, and of Christianity as a whole.

#### Rembrandt looks at Lastman

Whereas *Christ and the Samaritan Woman at the Well* draws from Michelangelo, Lastman's own work deeply influenced the artists around him, not least those of the younger generation. His impact on Rembrandt, in particular, has been much emphasized.<sup>14</sup> Rembrandt was in Lastman's studio in 1624/25, and must have seen the present work there. The painting apparently never left the Breestraat house, as it is described in Lastman's 1632 inventory (see Provenance). Lastman's detailed inventory lists around 60 paintings in the back room (which has been identified as the actual studio)<sup>15</sup> and remarkably our painting is one of only five works described with a frame. Does that imply that, rather than the painting remaining unsold, Lastman wished to keep it for himself? For sure it had significance to his family, for it stayed in their possession until at least 1664, when it is recorded in his niece's inventory.



Fig. 11  
Pieter Lastman, *The Angel with Manoah and His Wife*, 1617, oil on panel, 35.1 x 30.3 cm., Milwaukee, Bader Collection (in reverse)



Fig. 12  
Detail of cat. no. 10



Fig. 13 Pieter Lastman, *The Triumph of Mordechai*, 1624, oil on panel, 52 x 71.5 cm., Amsterdam, Rembrandthuis, on loan from the RCE



Fig. 14 Rembrandt, *The Triumph of Mordechai*, 1641, etching, 17.4 x 21.4 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 15 Rembrandt, *Christ and the Samaritan Woman at the Well*, 1634, etching, 12.3 x 10.7 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 16 Detail of fig. 15 (in reverse)



Fig. 17 Detail of cat. no. 10, digitally edited

Over the period of Rembrandt's career, two peaks are discernible in his emulation of his teacher. The first is around 1626/27, when Rembrandt was back in Leiden, putting into practice what he had learned in Amsterdam in such paintings as the so-called *Leiden History Painting* of 1626, which strongly depends on Lastman's *Coriolanus* of 1625; the *Balaam and the Ass* of the same year, which is based on Lastman's rendition of the same subject of 1622; and his *St Paul in Prison* of 1627, referencing Lastman's *Hermit Reading* of 1611.<sup>16</sup> A second wave of Lastman emulation occurred when Rembrandt was already a phenomenon in Amsterdam, during the period following Lastman's death. Famous examples from this period are *Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac* dated 1635 in St Petersburg, which relies on Lastman's grisaille of the subject of around 1612 in the Rembrandthuis (in turn inspired by Caravaggio); and the drawing (c. 1637) and painting of *Susanna and the Elders* (c. 1638/47), both in Berlin, that closely follow Lastman's *Susanna and the Elders* of 1614, likewise in Berlin.<sup>17</sup> Rembrandt's prints, too, reveal his debt to Lastman. That the 1641 dated *Triumph of Mordechai* directly relates to Lastman's 1624 painting of the subject in the Rembrandthuis is well known (fig. 13, 14).<sup>18</sup> Seemingly unnoticed, though, is Rembrandt's reliance on the present *Christ and the Samaritan Woman at the Well* for his own 1634 etching of the theme (fig. 15), a reliance best understood when the etching is viewed in reverse – the way Rembrandt conceived it (fig. 16).<sup>19</sup> Considering the etching's dating, it seems to be one of his earliest Lastman emulations after the latter's death.<sup>20</sup> Although Rembrandt did bring about significant changes – he created a more intimate environment by situating the scene against an old building structure and moving the Samaritan woman closer to the well – he kept the main figures largely as they were, including the position of Christ's hand on the well, as mentioned a rare motif, which must have appealed to him. By moving Lastman's Samaritan woman a little closer to the well (fig. 17), the resemblance with Rembrandt's etching is even more uncanny.

JH

#### Notes

- 1 See Dudok van Heel 2006, p. 101; Seifert 2011, p. 316: '[Opde kamer achter] 't vrouutgen aende put vande zelve [Pieter Lastman] beijde met een ebben lijst'.
- 2 Dudok van Heel 2006, p. 109: 'Een dito zijnde een Samaritaans vrouwtjen van Lastman'. Ditto here refers to the previous object in the inventory, which was likewise a painting.
- 3 Getty Provenance Index Database (<https://www.getty.edu/research/tools/provenance/search.html>, website accessed April 2022), archival inv. N-716: 'Samaritaans vrouutie van den zelve [Lastman] 15.'
- 4 For biographical references, see Dudok van Heel 2006, ch. 2, 'Pieter Lastman: een katholiek schilder in de Sint Anthonisbreestraat', pp. 52-123 (genealogy on pp. 99-

110); Seifert 2011, 'Pieter Lastman – "Constrijcken history Schilder tot Amsterdam' (ch.2), pp. 21-68.

- 5 A statement of 1619, in which Lastman himself attests to be 'around 36 years old', confirms this date.
- 6 Dudok van Heel 2006, pp. 81-85 points out Lastman's connection with the Amsterdam milieu of painters who had stayed in Naples for longer periods. In this respect, he also points to the first teacher of Lastman's pupil Rembrandt, Jacob van Swanenburgh (1571-1638), who had worked in Naples between 1600-1615, and who Lastman might have met there.
- 7 The Lastman family were active Catholics, and Pieter's mother Barbara would not have allowed a marriage with a protestant girl, just as she refused her daughter Agnieta permission to marry the Remonstrant François Venant. Significantly, their marriage took place mere months after Barbara's death in 1625. See Dudok van Heel 2006, p. 93.
- 8 Seifert 2011, figs. 69 (1617), 246 (1618), 134 (1619), 216 (1620).
- 9 The other two works from 1621 are *Jonah and the Whale*, oil on panel, 36 x 52.1 cm., Düsseldorf, Museum Kunst Palast (Seifert 2011, pp. 126, 128, fig. 112) and *Hagar in the Desert*, oil on panel, 51.6 x 45.8 cm., Jerusalem, The Israel Museum (C.T. Seifert, in: M. Sitt (ed.), *Pieter Lastman: In Rembrandts Schatten?*, exh. cat. Hamburg, Hamburger Kunsthalle 2006, pp. 94-97, cat. no. 17; Seifert 2011, pp. 163, 166, 168, fig. 171).
- 10 In northern painting, the theme seems to have been less widespread. During the first decades of the seventeenth century Abraham Bloemaert (1566-1651) from Utrecht painted it twice. See M. Roethlisberger, M.J. Bok, *Abraham Bloemaert and his sons: paintings and prints*, 2 vols., Doornspijk 1993, 1, pp. 149-150, cat. nos. 108, 109.
- 11 Lastman no doubt visited the Sistine Chapel but would have surely had access to prints after the frescoes, for instance the engraving by Gaspare Ruina (active c. 1500-1540).
- 12 See D. de Witt, *The Bader collection*, Kingston 2008, pp. 177-178, cat. no. 106.
- 13 Likewise, the episode takes place at the well of Jacob, who is an Old Testament type of Christ. In that sense, too, the element of supersessionism (the assertion that the New Covenant through Jesus Christ has superseded or replaced the Mosaic covenant) is central to the Biblical narrative.
- 14 See, for instance, C. Tümpel, 'Pieter Lastman and Rembrandt', in: A. Tümpel, P. Schatborn, *Pieter Lastman: the man who taught Rembrandt*, exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rembrandthuis 1991, pp. 54-84; M. Sitt, 'Pieter Lastman und Rembrandt – von der stummen Sprache des Körpers zur Verdichtung von Emotion', in: Hamburg 2006, pp. 72-85. Although Lastman painted the present work during the period that Jan Lievens presumably studied with him, it left no significant traces in that artist's work.
- 15 For the full inventory, see Dudok van Heel 2006, pp. 100-102; Seifert 2011, pp. 52-62, 312-320, Anhang A, with a discussion of its content.
- 16 For these examples, see Tümpel 1991; Sitt 2006. For Rembrandt's little known, yet convincing citation of Lastman's *Hermit Reading*, see Seifert 2011, p. 61, fig. 47.
- 17 Tümpel 1991; Sitt 2006.
- 18 See, for instance, Amsterdam 1991, pp. 118-119, cat. no. 17; M. Sitt, in Hamburg 2006, pp. 124-127, cat. no. 28.
- 19 E. Hinterding, *Rembrandt etchings from the Frits Lugt collection*, 2 vols., Paris 2008, p. 149, cat. no. 57, with previous literature references, points to a painting of the subject by Moretto da Brescia (c. 1498-1554), which Rembrandt supposedly co-owned with Pieter de la Tombe (listed as by Giorgione in Rembrandt's 1656 inventory), or, following Münz, a print of the subject by Girolamo Olgiati (active 1567-1575).
- 20 Rembrandt's *John the Baptist Preaching* in Berlin, which reflects a Lastman composition of the subject known through a later drawing, is usually dated c. 1634/35. See E. van de Wetering, in J. Bruyn et al., *A corpus of Rembrandt paintings*, 6 vols., Amsterdam etc. 1982-2014, 6 (2014), cat. no. 110, c. 1634/35. For the drawing by Tethart Philip Christian Haag (1737-1812) and currently with Tak Labriijn Fine Art, Amsterdam, see Amsterdam 1991, p. 77, fig. 25; Seifert 2011, p. 202, fig. 220.

**Master of the Schwartzberg Portraits**

Active in Frisia 1638 – 1646

*Portrait of a Young Woman in a Black Embroidered Dress with Lace Cuffs*

Oil on panel  
115,5 x 84,5 cm.

**Provenance:**

Belgium, private collection

**Literature:**

Unpublished

The present knee-length portrait of a young woman was designed entirely according to the classical topos of the marital portrait, underlined by the ring hanging on the chain on the woman's neck. The sitter in the portrait appears to be a typical Dutch woman of the period, dressed in an expensive black gown embroidered with silver thread, and embellished with lace collar, cuffs, and rosettes. She is holding a fashionable folding fan in her right hand. Fans and mirrors were fashionable accessories during this time period and were commonly depicted in portraits of women. She is wearing multiple strands of pearls around her neck and wrists. During this period, pearl ropes replaced gold chains as the accessory of choice. Textiles were often made in France and India and traded throughout Europe.

The woman, probably between 17 and 21 years old, looks straight at the viewer, with an expressionless face and restrained gestures. Her exquisite gown can be compared to the one in Nicholaes Pickenoy's (1588-1656) *Portrait of Catharina Hooft* (1618-1691), painted in 1636, now in the collection of the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> Catharina Hooft was born at the highest level of the Amsterdam patriciate and portrayed at only 18 here. The present painting can be dated to c. 1638, and was probably painted by an artist in the circle of Wybrand de Geest (1592-1661), the so-called 'Master of the Schwartzberg-portraits'.<sup>2</sup> This artist was active in Frisia from circa 1638 to 1646. According to Wassenbergh, the artist may even have been a pupil of Wybrand de Geest.<sup>3</sup> A pendant pair attributed to the mas-





Fig. 1  
 Nicolaes Elias Pickenoy,  
*Portrait of Catharina Hoof*  
 (1618-1691), 1636, oil on  
 canvas, 185.2 x 105.4 cm.,  
 Berlin, Gemäldegalerie

Notes

- 1 See for Catharina Hoof's portrait, and that of her husband Cornelis de Graeff: S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, 'Toen hingen er burgers als vorsten aan de muur', in N. Middelkoop (ed.), *Kopstukken : Amsterdammers geportretteerd 1600-1800*, exh. cat. Amsterdam, Amsterdam Historisch Museum 2002-2003, pp. 46-63, p. 53, figs. 65a-b.
- 2 Provisional name given by A. Wassenbergh to the painter of eight unsigned portraits that are stylistically related, among which are portraits of the family Thoe Schwartzenberg en Hohenlangenberg. See: A. Wassenbergh, *De portretkunst in Friesland in de zeventiende eeuw*, Lochem 1967, pp. 40-41.
- 3 P. Bakker, *De Friese schilderkunst in de Gouden Eeuw*, Zwolle 2008, p. 203.
- 4 Inv.nos. S2016-002.
- 5 On 28 September 2021, after inspection of the original.
- 6 See Dudok van Heel 2002-2003.

ter of the Schwartzenberg-portraits, *Portrait of Eduarda van Juckema* and *Portrait of Homme van Camstra*, dated 1641, are in the collection of Fries Museum in Leeuwarden.<sup>4</sup> The attribution of the present painting to this artist has been kindly suggested by Rudi Ekkart and Claire van den Donk.<sup>5</sup>

For generations, art historians have described the genre of portraiture in terms of its ability to visualize the likeness, identity, personality, and emotional state of its subjects. Full-length portraits were always considered a prestigious aristocratic indulgence in Dutch portrait painting, accorded only to exceptionally distinguished and wealthy families within the bourgeois milieu.<sup>6</sup>

WWB



Detail cat no. 11

**Christoffel Pierson**  
The Hague 1631 – 1714 Gouda

*A Pair of Still Lifes with Falconry Instruments*

Signed on the left pendant (behind the net): Chr Pierson  
Both oil on canvas  
79 x 110 cm. / 79 x 109.6 cm.



**Provenance:**

Possibly Gian Gastone de' Medici (1671-1737), Duke of Tuscany  
France, private collection

**Literature:**

Unpublished

According to the artist and art theorist Arnold Houbraken, Christoffel Pierson was of 'honourable descent.'<sup>1</sup> Pierson grew up in The Hague and his early education involved the study of Latin, French, writing and drawing. He began his artistic career making portraits and history paintings, but soon turned to the depiction of hunting gear. He chose not to focus on the hunt itself, nor on the trophies, but on the actual implements involved in trapping and killing the game. This genre, the so-called trompe l'oeil game pieces, which consisted of accessories suspended on a monochrome wall, gained popularity in The Hague in the mid-seventeenth century. The Princes of Orange resided in the city, and the States General convened there, giving rise to a culture of hunting there. Those working in this genre often selected large canvases in order to represent the hunting equipment on a life-size scale.

This extraordinarily well-preserved pair of paintings, set against a white stucco wall, display elegantly arranged hunting paraphernalia. Through well observed effects of light and shadow and meticulous attention to the

smallest detail, the artist gives the painting a deceptively natural look. Along the top of the canvasses, an upturned and a downturned flint-lock-sporting gun rest upon two protruding nails, above a gamebag and other paraphernalia. The falconry hoods with red plumes are characteristic elements in these paintings, appearing in other works by the artist. In these still lifes he has placed different types of bird call whistles (for example, a crab claw hanging from a red ribbon), a wooden bird cage, a powder bag, a powder horn, a game bag with a leather strap, nets, and a bow and arrows in two elaborate arrangements. Strong contrasts of light and shade enliven the images and strengthen the sense that bright daylight floods the scene. This effect of light also applies to another painting by the artist, *Niche with Falconry Gear*, though upright and smaller, in the collection of The National Gallery of Art in Washington.<sup>2</sup> In this work, datable to the 1660s, Pierson decided to place the objects in an arched, marble-framed niche set into a white stucco wall, to further emphasize the three-dimensionality of the still life.

This pair of paintings might have once belonged to the collection of Gian Gastone de' Medici (1671-1737), the last Grand Duke of Tuscany from the famous De' Medici family. With the death of Gian Gastone the male line of the ruling Medici dynasty died out. Both paintings are inscribed on the reverse centre, respectively Charl: Pierson and Charles Pierson, each with the branded initials GG and the Grand Ducal Crown and old inventory numbers.

WWB

**Notes**

- 1 A. Tummars, in: S. Ebert-Schifferer, *Deceptions and Illusions : Five Centuries of Trompe l'Oeil Painting*, exh. cat. Washington, National Gallery of Art 2002-2003, p. 380, note 6, with reference to A. Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, 3 vols., Amsterdam 1718-1721, II (1719), pp. 260-262.
- 2 Christoffel Pierson, *Niche with Falconry Gear*, oil on canvas, 80.5 x 64.5 cm., Washington, National Gallery of Art, acc. no. 2003.39.1.



Detail cat. no. 12\_1



Detail cat. no. 12\_2



**Jan van Ravesteyn**

c. 1572 – The Hague – 1657

*Portrait of a Man in Full-Length*

Signed with monogram and dated lower left: JVR 1635

Oil on panel

115 x 85 cm.

**Provenance:**

Madrid, private collection

**Literature:**

Unpublished

The present portrait, a comparatively late work by Jan van Ravesteyn, painted at three-quarter length, is an archetypical image of an affluent Dutch male citizen in 1635, who regards the viewer with self-assurance. The man is fashionably dressed in the French manner, but without undue excess. The meticulous rendering of the man's beautifully preserved black doublet with gold details and lace collar showcase Van Ravesteyn's fine eye for detail. He holds his soft kid gloves with one hand, while resting his other on the edge of the table, covered with a red cloth and his black hat. Although unfortunately the sitter's identity is so far unknown, he was probably a member of a wealthy family of Amsterdam merchants, and presumably approximately forty years old here. The hat lying on the table can often be seen in portraits where it may be speculated that the sitters wanted to emphasize their claim to a patrician status.<sup>1</sup> For exam-

ple, the patrician Reinier Adriaensz Pauw (1564–1636) was painted by Van Ravesteyn in 1631 (Fig. 1). By that time, Pauw's years as the most powerful political figure of Amsterdam were long over, but he was still a member of the city council and the Lord of Rijnenburg and Teylingerbosch, which justified the presence of a hat on the table in his portrait. The same goes for Jan van Ravesteyn's Portrait of Nicolaas Cromhout (1561–1657), painted around 1620, in the collection of The National Gallery of Prague (Fig. 2). In 2019 an exhibition was solely devoted to this portrait at Sternberg Palace in Prague. This portrait served as the model for a knee-length portrait, which probably dates to 1622. This copy (Fig. 3) draws attention to Cromhout's identity, as on the table two attributes have been added: a hammer, which symbolizes his position as President of the Hof van Holland, and a hat, referring to his title of Lord of Werkendam.





Fig. 1  
Jan van Ravesteyn, *Portrait of Reinier Adriaensz Pauw* (1564-1636), 1631, oil on canvas, 125 x 98 cm., private collection (photo RKD)



Fig. 2  
Jan van Ravesteyn, *Portrait of Nicolaas Cromhout* (1561-1641), c. 1620/22, oil on panel, 68.5 x 54 cm., Prague, Národní Galerie v Praze



Fig. 3  
After Jan van Ravesteyn, *Portrait of Nicolaas Cromhout* (1561-1641), 1622, oil on canvas, 63 x 54 cm., Amsterdam, Amsterdam Museum, on loan Rijksdienst Cultureel Erfgoed

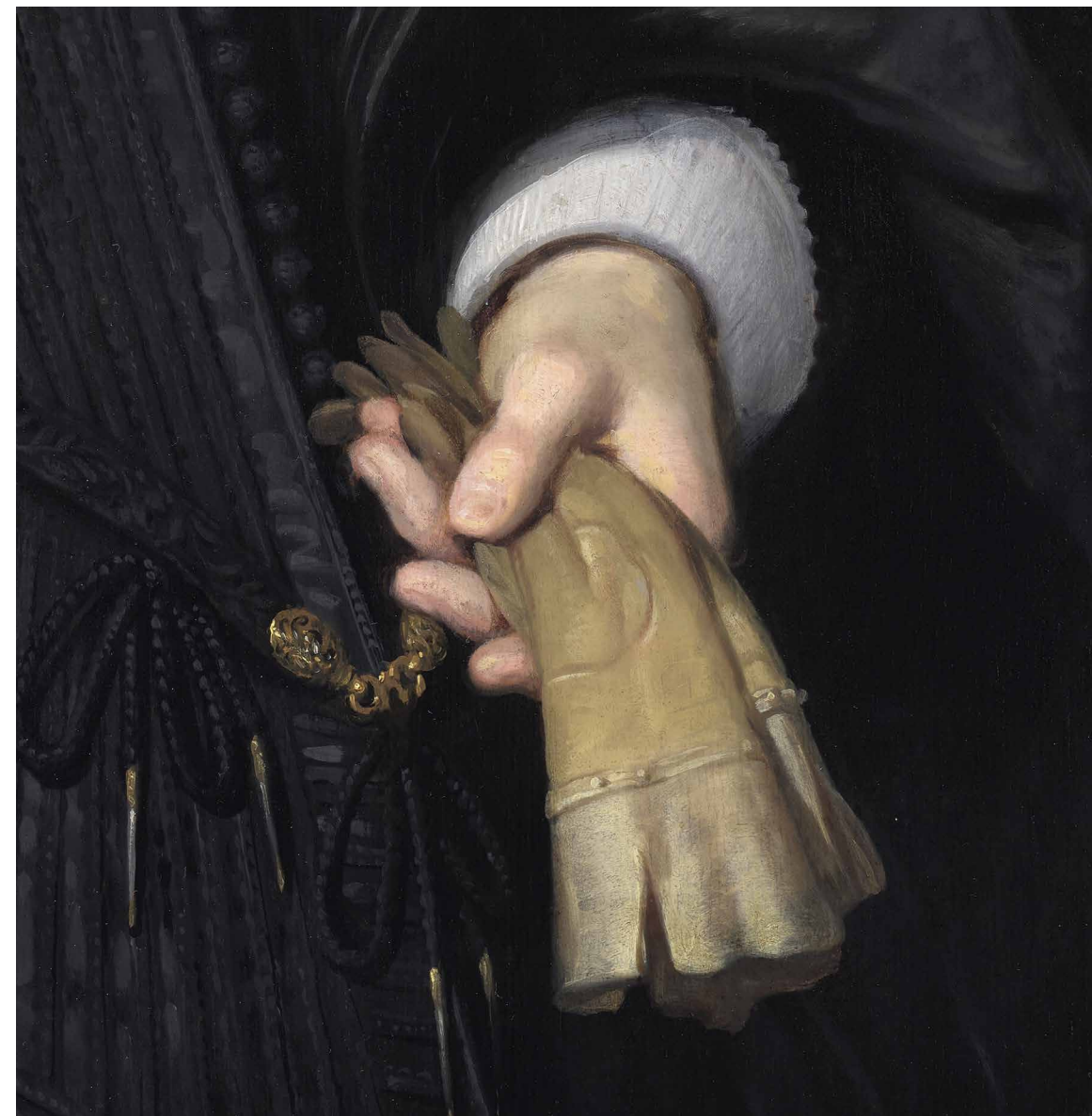
Jan van Ravesteyn, son of the glass painter Anthonie van Ravesteyn and elder brother of the painter Anthonie van Ravesteyn the Younger (c. 1580-1669), became a member of the Guild of St Luke in The Hague in February 1598.<sup>2</sup> He is known exclusively as a portrait painter. Only a few early works survive – among them the famous dated *Portrait of Hugo Grotius* of 1599, now in the Fondation Custodia, Paris – and only a few of his paintings are dated, most of which are datable to 1610-1640. Jan's mature output shares a clear affinity with that of Michiel van Mierevelt (1566-1641), active in Delft, who is sometimes thought to be his master. Such an assumption might be supported by Jan's documented presence in Delft in October 1597, when he appeared twice as a witness before a notary.<sup>3</sup> In any case, Jan's style is somewhat more elegant than Van Mierevelt's, and is characterised by a slight inclination to flatter his sitters. Van Ravesteyn's clientele counted many prominents, among them Prince Frederik Hendrik of Orange, and high-ranking officer-noblemen at his court. Van Ravesteyn worked exclusively as a portraitist, and his workshop was no doubt responsible for an extended production of smaller replicas of portraits of

well-known sitters. In addition, several imposing group portraits of The Hague Militia Companies from his hand are known. Van Ravesteyn's son-in-law, the portrait painter Adriaen Hanneman (1603/04-1671), was not taught by him, but by his brother Anthonie.

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#### Notes

- 1 See: J. Oddens, "You can leave your hat on: Men's portraits, power, and identity in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic", in: *The Seventeenth Century* 36/5 (2021), pp. 797-853 (see <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268117X.2020.1832562>, website consulted April 2022).
- 2 For biographical references, see A. Bredius, E.W. Moes, 'De schildersfamilie Ravesteyn', in: *Oud Holland* 9 (1891), pp. 207-220, 10 (1892), pp. 41-52, esp. pp. 42-47; R.E.O. Ekkart, in: J. Turner (ed.), *The Dictionary of Art*, 34 vols., New York 1996, 26, pp. 37-38.
- 3 Ariane van Suchtelen, in: G. Luijten et al., *Dawn of the Golden Age: Northern Netherlandish Art 1580-1620*, exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijkmuseum 1993-1994, p. 314, rightly points out that the similarities in style chiefly appear in Van Ravesteyn's later work.



Detail cat no. 13

**Circle of Rembrandt**

Circa 1631 – 1635

*Tronie of a Man in an Oriental Costume*

Oil on panel

14.5 x 11.5 cm.

**Provenance:**

Possibly sale Antwerp, P.A.J. Knijff, 18 July 1785, lot 8 (15 florins, to Stieber)

**Literature:**

Possibly C. Hofstede de Groot, *Beschreibendes und kritisches Verzeichnis der Werke der hervorragendsten holländischen Maler des XVII Jahrhunderts*, 10 vols., Esslingen 1907-1928, 6 (1915), p. 175, cat. no. 357a (English ed., London 1916, p. 202, no. 357a), as by Rembrandt

The present painting exists in more than one version, but probably is the prototype of all the other versions.<sup>1</sup> It shows the highest artistic quality. The paint has been thinly and smoothly applied along the background and flesh tones, with visible brushwork along the figure's contours and drapery folds. Character heads like these were called 'Turkish *tronies*' and were popular in the beginning of the seventeenth century. Rembrandt (1606-1669), who was the best-known painter working in Leiden in the 1620s, was following contemporary invention with his Eastern motifs.<sup>2</sup> He was inspired by his master Pieter Lastman (1583-1633), adapting motifs from his master's compositions,<sup>3</sup> as well as by his friend Jan Lievens (1607-1674) and above all by Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), in his adoption of Eastern-leaning elements in *tronies* and biblical paintings. The way in which Lastman dressed his biblical figures is clearly intended to evoke the Orient. However, Rembrandt's appropriation of Oriental motifs did not have much to do with the authentic imagery of the East, but rather had

an aura of his home surroundings. He was catering to his circle of private and princely collectors who preceded European artists in cultivating a taste for the art of foreign cultures. Later, numerous successors continued to work on this theme.

The present painting belongs to the Leiden school of circa 1631-1635 and is obviously influenced by Rembrandt as well as by Jan Lievens. Lievens had introduced the prominent exotic feather of a paradise bird in 1629, in his monumental *Man in Oriental Costume ('Sultan Soliman')*, now in Potsdam.<sup>4</sup> However, Jan Lievens never executed *tronies* on such a small scale, and he did not use an oval format. The infrared reflectography of the present painting shows careful outlines (fig. 1), untypical of both Lievens and Rembrandt who did not prepare their paintings with precise underdrawing.<sup>5</sup> The Rembrandtesque style of the present work, with its bright colours and delicate, loosely executed brushwork speaks for an



ACTUAL SIZE

execution after 1631. The sitter in this painting is presumably the same model as in Rembrandt's *Tronie of a Man in Oriental Costume* of 1633 in the collection of the Alte Pinakothek in Munich (fig. 2); the sitter clearly has the same face.<sup>6</sup> Rembrandt left Leiden for Amsterdam in 1631, to run the workshop of the famous art dealer Hendrik Uylenburgh (1587-1661). His friend Jan Lievens headed to London shortly thereafter.

Several other versions of the present painting were on the market in past decades, unsigned or attributed to Jan van Staveren (c. 1625-1668). They have a similar composition, but a different sitter. The portrait pair auc-

tioned at Christie's New York in 2005 is mentioned in Werner Sumowski's *Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schüler* as by Jan van Staveren.<sup>7</sup> Sumowski lists two other versions, including a rectangular one in the J.G. Johnson Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art.<sup>8</sup> The man presented in these three versions is also wearing an oriental costume, a costume which was probably inspired by the Eastern visitors to the Dutch Republic and the encounters made through the merchant navy.<sup>9</sup> There are still a lot of question marks about the attribution of this group of paintings, and were these paintings an exercise in imitation and emulation? But one thing is for sure; the present little painting holds an enormous power.

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Fig. 1 Infrared reflectography of cat. no. 13



Fig. 1 Rembrandt, *Tronie of a Man in Oriental Costume*, 1633, oil on panel, 85.8 x 63.8 cm., Munich, Alte Pinakothek

#### Notes

- 1 In addition to the present work, these are: sale London, Sotheby's, 11 December 1985, lot 111 (with female pendant); sale London, Christie's, 13 December 2002, lot 67; sale New York, Christie's, 25 May 2005, lot 211 (with female pendant); Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, J.G. Johnson Collection (our fig. 3).
- 2 For an overview see: G. Schwartz, "Convention and Uniqueness, Rembrandt's Response to the East", in: G. Schwartz et al, *Rembrandt's Orient*, exh. cat. Basel, Kunstmuseum/Potsdam, Museum Barberini, 2020-2021, pp. 56-73.
- 3 Idem, p. 59, see for example: Rembrandt, *The ass of the Prophet Balaam*, 1626, Paris, Musée Cognacq-Jay with motifs taken from Pieter Lastman, *Balaam and his Ass*, 1622, Jerusalem, Israel Museum.
- 4 With thanks to Bernhard Schnackenburg for his opinion on the painting, in an e-mail communication 18 March 2021. See B. Schnackenburg, *Jan Lievens: friend and rival of the young Rembrandt: with a catalogue raisonné of his early Leiden work 1623-1632*, Petersberg 2016, pp. 269-272, cat. no. 86.
- 5 Infrared images reveal a graphite underdrawing through the face, along the folds of the drapery on the figure and in the background. Dendrochronological analysis executed by Dr. Peter Klein demonstrates that the execution of the painting is plausible from 1590 onwards. Dendrochronological report available on request.
- 6 Oil on panel, 85.8 x 63.8 cm., inv. no. 421.
- 7 W. Sumowski, *Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schüler*, Landau/Pfalz 1983, 6 vols, 5 (1990), pp. 3116, 3309, no. 2160.
- 8 Circle of Rembrandt, *Bust of a Man in a Turban*, oil on panel, 17.3 x 13.3 cm., Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, J.G. Johnson Collection
- 9 P. van der Ploeg, in: P. van der Ploeg et al., *Rembrandt, een jongensdroom: 17de-eeuwse Nederlandse schilderkunst: de collectie Kremer*, exh. cat. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum 2008, p. 160.

**Salomon van Ruysdael**

Naarden 1600/03 – 1670 Haarlem

*Sailing Ship off the Coast*

Signed and dated on the boat: SVR

Oil on panel

18 x 24 cm.

**Provenance:**

Paris, collection Sedelmeyer

France, private collection until 2020

**Literature:**

Unpublished

The present painting, which is in remarkably good condition, is one of a number that Salomon van Ruysdael painted in Haarlem around 1650. On the back of the panel is the collection stamp of Charles Sedelmeyer (1837-1925), a Viennese art dealer who moved to Paris and opened a gallery on rue de La Rochefoucauld, where, in 1893, Jean-François Millet's *The Angelus* was sold for 553,000 francs, along with many old master paintings including works by Dutch masters. The composition is bathed in a special atmosphere so diffuse that it recalls the light application of watercolour. The subject of the painting is shipping on a river; the sailboat flying the Dutch flag is a "schouw", a shallow-draft vessel used to ship goods and carry occasional passengers on inland waterways. On the riverbank along the horizon a windmill can be seen, and the contours of a distant village.

A comparable marine painting is in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (fig. 1). Although the Lilian version is smaller, both are comparable in composition and atmosphere, although the Lilian version is warmer in tonality, and both are in very well-preserved condition.

Salomon was the son of the Mennonite cabinetmaker Jacob Jansz de Goyer (c. 1560-1616) from Naarden. Shortly after his father's death, Ruysdael and his brother Isack – the father of the famous landscape painter Jacob van Ruisdael (1628/29-1682) – moved to Haarlem, where Salomon entered the Guild of St Luke in 1623 under the name Salomon de Gooyer. Shortly thereafter he adopted the name Ruysdael from the castle of that name in the Gooiland, which may once have been a family possession. Although several history paintings, and even some still lifes



and batailles by his hand are known, Van Ruysdael is most of all known as one of the 'classic' masters of Dutch seventeenth century landscape painting. His subject matter included seascapes, winter landscapes, dune landscapes, village views and a wide variety of river landscapes. While initially adhering to the new, realistic landscape style of Esaias van de Velde (1587-1630), Ruysdael – whose earliest dated picture is from 1626 – quickly elaborated his manner, and together with Jan van Goyen (1596-1656) and Pieter de Molyn (1595-1661), created a distinctive landscape art depicting the environs of Haarlem, applying a restricted tonal range to a modest subject matter.

Sometime before 1627 Ruysdael married Maycke Willemsdr Buyse (d. 1660), also from a Mennonite family background. Their son Jacob Salomonsz van Ruysdael (1629/30-1681) also became a painter. During the next three decades, Salomon established himself as a well-to-do Haarlem citizen and a prolific and successful painter who had several pupils, among them his son, his nephew Jacob van Ruysdael (1628/9-1682), and Cornelis Decker (c. 1620-1678). Mayke died in 1660, followed ten years later by her husband, who was buried in Haarlem's St Bavokerk.

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Fig. 1 Salomon van Ruysdael, *Marine*, signed and dated SvR.1650, oil on panel, 34.6 x 43.5 cm., New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art



Detail of cat. no. 15

**Willem Schellinks**

1623 – Amsterdam – 1678

*Winter Landscape with Mountains and Ruins*

Signed lower left: W. Schellinks

Oil on panel

27.5 x 34 cm.

**Provenance:**

Netherlands, private collection

**Literature:**

Unpublished

Willem Schellinks was not only a painter, but also a draughtsman, etcher and poet. He was one of the most widely traveled Dutch artists of his time. Together with Lambert Doomer (1623-1700), he made a tour along the Loire and the Seine rivers in France in 1646, and between 1661 and 1665 he visited England, Italy, Malta, Germany and Switzerland with his pupil, the son of the Amsterdam merchant Jacob Thierry. In Italy he was admitted to the group of Dutch artists in Rome known as the *Schildersbent*, whose members were called *Bentvueghels* ('birds of a feather'). After his return to Amsterdam in 1665 he began to depict Italianate subject-matter in both drawings and paintings, and in this he was influenced by the work of Jan Asselijn (circa 1610-1652). Two years later, in 1667, Schellinks married Maria Neus. He produced many

paintings during the following years. Schellinks died in 1678, the same year as his wife. His colleagues Frederick de Moucheron (1633-1686) and Nicolaes Berchem (1620-1683) completed several of his paintings.

The present painting is a beautifully preserved winter landscape with a frozen canal running alongside an old bridge and fortified city walls, with a mountain in the background. Several boats are grounded on a frozen river, while fishermen are pulling their nets out of the ice in the foreground; distant figures on the ice can be seen in the background. The frozen landscape is brought to life by the lively human activities on the ice. The treatment of the buildings reflects the artist's debt to Dutch Italianate landscape painters.





Fig. 1 Willem Schellinks, *City Walls in Winter*, signed, oil on canvas, 74 x 105 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Dutch landscapes of this type were collected in eighteenth-century England and France, where they influenced the development of Rococo landscape painting. There is a strong tonal contrast of light and dark in the painting which is dominated by grey, white and brown, and enlivened by the colourful clothing of the figures in the foreground. It is broadly painted, yet retains a calm, static quality.

Another beautiful example of his work is in the collection of -and on display in- The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (fig.1). Here we also see a cold wintery day with city walls and figures on the ice. More comparable to the Lilian work in size however is *A Winter Landscape with the Pont du Rhone, Lyons*, in the collection of Kelvingrove Dutch Art Gallery in Glasgow (fig. 2).

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Fig. 2 Willem Schellinks, *A Winter Landscape with the Pont du Rhone, Lyons*, oil on panel, 29 x 32.8 cm., Glasgow, Kelvingrove Dutch Art Gallery



Detail of cat. no. 16



**Michael Sweerts**

Brussels 1618 – 1664 Goa

*Backgammon Players in an Interior*

Signed lower centre: MS

Oil on canvas

75 x 102 cm.

**Provenance:**

Bologna, collection Ercolani family, for several generations until 2020<sup>1</sup>

**Literature:**

V. Bloch, *Michael Sweerts*, The Hague 1968, 23, fig. 18

R. Kultzen, 'Französische Anklänge im Werk von Michael Sweerts', in: A.-M.S. Logan (ed.), *Essays in northern European art : presented to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann on his sixtieth birthday*, Doornspijk 1983, pp. 127-133, pp. 128-129, fig. 2

R. Kultzen, *Michael Sweerts : Brussels 1618 – Goa 1664*, Ghent 1996, pp. 31, 100, cat. no. 44, pl. 44

P.C. Sutton, 'Introduction', in: G. Jansen, P.C. Sutton, *Michael Sweerts (1618-1664)*, exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, San Francisco, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art 2002, pp. 11-24, p. 16, fig. 11



When art historian Willem Martin published the first study on Michael Sweerts in 1907 he claimed him for the Dutch, hailing him as the ‘enigmatic Dutch Le Nain.’<sup>2</sup> This statement soon proved to be erroneous, when Sweerts was identified as the son of merchant David Sweerts and his wife Martynken Balliel from Brussels, where he was baptised on 29 September 1618. Nothing further is heard about Sweerts until 1646, when he is documented as living in the Via Margutta in Rome. It is possible, though, that he arrived earlier; according to an acquaintance, he was well travelled and spoke seven languages.<sup>3</sup> Although not recorded as a member of the *Bentvueghels*, the society of Netherlandish artists in Rome, documents show that in 1646 he was entrusted – on behalf of the Accademia di San Luca – with collecting contributions among the Netherlandish painters for the feast of St Luke. He is mentioned as being in the Via Margutta until 1651. During this period Sweerts enjoyed success with paintings in a style adhering to the *Bambochianti*, depicting subjects ranging from every day, local common life, artists sketching, artists’ studios, travellers, men playing games and large interiors, all with a solemn monumentality that was completely his own. In Rome he enjoyed the patronage of the wealthy Deutz brothers from Amsterdam, who visited the city during their Grand Tour, c. 1646-1650. Their inventories mention numerous pictures by Sweerts.<sup>4</sup> Another important patron was the young nephew of Pope Innocent X, Prince-Cardinal Camillo Pamphilj (1622-1666), who owned at least four paintings by Sweerts. Moreover, an entry in Pamphilj’s account book of March 1652 mentions ‘various amounts of oils used since 17<sup>th</sup> February in His Excellency’s Academy’, giving evidence that Sweerts set up a painting academy in Pamphilj’s palace.<sup>5</sup> By July 1655 at the latest, Sweerts was back in Brussels, where he stood as godfather to his nephew. A document of February 1656 indicates that he had set up another academy, primarily to train tapestry designers. While this major project evolved, he decided to join the evangelical *Société des missions Etrangères*, or the French Missionaries, which is probably why he left for Amsterdam in 1660. The diary of fellow missionary Nicolas Étienne, with whom Sweerts visited the churches and the poor of Amsterdam, describes Sweerts’ life as ‘tout extraordinaire et miraculeuse’, informing us that he was a vegetarian, sleeping on the floor and sharing everything with others.<sup>6</sup> In December 1661 the missionaries sailed to Palestine *en route* to China. During the trip Sweerts started to exhibit uncontrolled outbursts, leading to his dismissal from the mission at arrival in Tabriz (modern day Iran). The next we hear of is the painter’s death in Goa, India, whilst with the Portuguese Jesuits in 1664. He left behind an oeuvre of little over 120 surviving paintings, only three of which are dated.



Fig. 1 Louis le Nain, *The Guardroom*, 1643, oil on canvas, 111 x 137 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre



Fig. 2 Lucas Vorsterman after Adam de Coster, *Tric-Trac Players by Candlelight*, c. 1628, engraving, 27.1 x 35.1 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (reverse)

The present painting – large, compositionally complex, ambitiously arranged, and masterful in its colouration – is one of the masterpieces of Sweerts’ early period, and one of five works that depict men playing games.<sup>7</sup> We are introduced to a shadowy interior with a beautiful black and white tiled floor by a seated lute player in the left foreground, whose figure remains in shadow. Dressed in a brown fur-lined coat, a red cloak and a hat, he quietly plays his instrument as he looks out at the viewer. In the background a curtained door gives a glimpse of a gorgeous blue sky. The main light source, though, comes from the left, and illuminates the central table scene with a stark chiaroscuro. Around the table, two elegantly dressed young men with feathered hats play backgammon. While the man behind the table concentrates on his move, the



Fig. 3 Cornelis Anthonisz, *The Prodigal Son Dissipating his Patrimony in a Brothel*, c. 1540, woodcut, 27 x 21.2 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

other stares to the left, the dice waiting in his hand. A third man in a grey cloak, also at the table, watches in silence. Among the company we notice above all two attractive ladies with songbooks, one of whom looks over her shoulder to the left, where a man plays with a dog. In the right foreground, a magnificent still-life of a lute on a chair, a yellow cloak, and piled-up songbooks on a wooden box catches surprisingly bright light. Behind it, two boys fold a cloth, while in the dim background couples climb the stairs.

Sweerts’ *Backgammon Players* grants us a view into a Roman brothel, where it’s dark during the day and high-class young men play for money; where music is made, and pretty women in coy dresses sing, and take men upstairs. Remarkably, no signs are found of inebriation, loudness or lewd excess. Given the painting’s varied composition, Sweerts admirably succeeds in unifying its atmosphere, aptly described by Sweerts expert Rolf Kultzen as an ‘expectant silence.’<sup>8</sup> Indeed, a concentrated, psychological tension can be felt, both amongst the players and the entourage. In this respect Kultzen rightly points to the work of the Le Nain brothers, especially the *Guardroom* of 1643 in the Louvre (fig. 1). The well-travelled Sweerts must have been keenly aware of the works of the Le Nains, who lived and worked in Paris, and our *Backgammon Players* certainly pays debt to their artistic vocabulary (not for nothing was he called the ‘Dutch Le Nain’ by Martin). Still, he relied on other sources as well. In Rome, he no doubt saw paintings by the Caravaggists that employed the motif of a sitting lute player as an inductive *repoussoir* figure. Such a work by the Flemish Caravaggist Adam de Coster (1585/86-1643) – famous for his depictions of night scenes – which Sweerts probably knew through the engraving by Lucas Vorsterman (1595/96-1674/75), seems a direct example (fig. 2).<sup>9</sup> Apart from the obvious compositional analogies, De Coster’s image corresponds in its depiction of quiet concentration and the absence of (alcoholic) glut. A sixteenth century engraving by Cornelis Anthonisz (c. 1505-1553) shows yet more striking parallels (fig. 3). Depicting the biblical parable of *The Prodigal Son Dissipating his Patrimony in a Brothel*, this allegorical print shows an interior with a tiled floor, in which a man (*Mundus*, the allegorical representation of the World) sits in a chair in the same position in the left foreground as our lute player. He likewise wears a fur-lined coat, his foot is identically positioned (here resting on the head of *Conscientia*, Conscience), as is his right arm, which rests on the armchair. Behind him we see a similar doorway with a view to a landscape. At the table the prodigal son sits behind a backgammon board, surrounded by female figures representing *Caro* (Lust), *Haeresis* (Heresy), *Avaritia* (Greed) and *Vanitas* (Vanity). Do these parallels imply that Sweerts intended his *Backgammon Players* to be a disguised depiction of the Parable of the Prodigal Son? This seems less likely, as more direct clues are absent.

In fact, while using Anthonisz' composition as a template, Sweerts' *Backgammon Players*, though highly constructed, aims to reflect a contemporaneous reality. Thus we recognise the lady looking over her shoulder in Sweerts' *Young Woman at her Toilet*, even wearing the same hairnet (fig. 4).<sup>10</sup> With her jewellery, the mirror on her lap and a maidservant arranging her hair, the innuendo of the shadowed, anonymous man entering the room suggests she is a courtesan, the same role she adopts in the *Backgammon Players*. Who this woman was, or how she made her living we do not know, but she was someone in Sweerts' Roman orbit. The man in the grey cloak likewise reappears in Sweerts' oeuvre, not as an individual model, but rather as a type, apparently representing the traveller, or visitor. As such we find him in the *Painter's Studio* in Zürich, in the *Bathing Scene*



Fig. 4 Michael Sweerts, *Young Woman at her Toilet*, oil on canvas, 36 x 47 cm., Rome, Galleria dell' Accademia Nazionale di San Luca



Fig. 5 Michael Sweerts, *Harbour Scene*, oil on canvas, 64 x 87 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre



Fig. 6 Michael Sweerts, *A Painter's Studio*, c. 1648, oil on canvas, 71 x 74 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 7 Michael Sweerts, *A Game of Draughts*, 1652, oil on canvas, 48.6 x 38.1 cm., The Hague, Mauritshuis (on loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)

in Strasbourg and – appearing very similar to the figure in our painting – in the Louvre *Harbour Scene*, where he disembarks, as a porter carries his trunk behind him (fig. 5).<sup>11</sup> It is noteworthy that Sweerts found willing patronage in exactly this kind of wealthy visitor on their Grand Tour.<sup>12</sup> One could easily imagine how the *Backgammon Players* alluded to these visitors' Roman experience, possibly even involving Sweerts, who maintained close ties and – as has been suggested – might well have intended some of his works as 'unique souvenirs' for these Grand Tourists.<sup>13</sup> In this regard it is interesting to reconsider Kultzen's suggestion that the lute player might be a self-portrait.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand – and in absence of knowledge about the early history of our canvas – the work's 20<sup>th</sup> century Italian provenance does not necessarily point in the direction of a souvenir for a Northern visitor.

Placing the *Backgammon Players* in Sweerts' oeuvre, it seems clear that it was painted around the same time as the Rijksmuseum's *Painter's Studio* (fig. 6), datable to c. 1648/50, which employs a similar pictorial scheme, including the sitting figure in the left foreground (becoming a Sweerts favourite), the wonderful still life in the right foreground, a similar tiled floor, and the inclusion of a daylight vista in the background.<sup>15</sup> The outstanding 1652 *Game of Draughts* in the Mauritshuis (fig. 7), the only instance in which he revisited the theme of a board game, already belongs to a later, more polished phase.

#### Notes

- Vitale Bloch first published the painting in 1968 (see Literature), as in an Italian private collection. According to the Fototeca Zeri, entry no. 51825, the painting was with Di Castro-Sestieri gallery in Rome in 1973 (see: <http://catalogo.fondazionezeri.unibo.it/search/work>, website assessed April 2022). Kultzen 1983, p. 128, states that the painting was currently (i.e. in 1983) offered in the London art trade. Later the painting appears to have been offered in a sale, Milan, Asta Finarte, 11 June 1996, lot 54. It is not known if these records occurred while the painting was in the possession of the Ercolani family.
- W. Martin, 'Michiel Sweerts als schilder. Proeve van een Biografie en een Catalogus van zijn schilderijen.', in: *Oud Holland* 25 (1907), pp. 133-156, p. 134. See also P.C. Sutton, 'Introduction', in: Amsterdam/San Francisco/Hartfort 2002, pp. 11-24, p. 12. For Sweerts' biography, see mainly Kultzen 1996, pp. 1-11, 'Life History'; J. Bikker, 'Sweerts's Life and Career – A Documentary View', in: Amsterdam/San Francisco/Hartfort 2002, pp. 25-36.
- Kultzen 1996, p. 81, appendix G; Bikker 2002, pp. 25, 27 suggests that Sweerts might be identified with a 'Michele' who lived in the same Via Margutta in 1640, in the company of a certain 'Ghirardo, fiamengho, pittore'. In this respect, Bikker points to Jan Six owning two works by Sweerts, which he might have bought in Rome during his Grand Tour, c. 1641/43.
- J. Bikker, 'The Deutz brothers, Italian paintings and Michiel Sweerts: new information from Elisabeth Croymans's Journal', in: *Simiolus* 26 (1998), pp. 277-311, pp. 283, 293.
- See L. Yeager-Crasselt, *Michael Sweerts (1618-1664): shaping the artist and the academy in Rome and Brussels*, Turnhout 2015.
- See Kultzen 1996, pp. 77-83, Appendixes, for source documents.
- The other four are Kultzen 1996, cat. nos. 41 (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum), 42 (Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza), 43 (Paris, Louvre) and 46 (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum). A sixth work, Kultzen's cat. no. 80 (private collection), seems doubtful, as Kultzen acknowledges.
- Kultzen 1983, p. 128.
- For the suggestion that De Coster might have visited Rome, see J. Hillegers, in: J. Hillegers et al., *Salomon Lillian Old Masters 2018*, Amsterdam 2018, pp. 30-37, cat. no. 5, esp. pp. 32, 37, note 10.
- Kultzen 1996, cat. no. 13.
- Kultzen 1996, cat. nos. 1 (*Painter's Studio*), 38 (*Harbour Scene*), 64 (*Bathing Scene*). For the latter, see also G. Jansen, in: Amsterdam/San Francisco/Hartfort 2002, cat. no. XVIII.
- Bikker 1998, esp. pp. 292-302.
- Bikker 1998, pp. 299-300, with reference to Th. Döring, 'Th. Döring, 'Belebte Skulpturen bei Michael Sweerts: Zur Rezeptionsgeschichte eines pseudo-antiken Ausdruckskopfes', in: *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch (Studien zur niederländischen Kunst; Festschrift für Prof. Dr. Justus Müller-Hofstede)* 55 (1994), pp. 55-83, pp. 72-73, and notes 71-72.
- Kultzen 1983, p. 128.
- Kultzen 1996, cat. no. 6; G. Jansen, in: Amsterdam/San Francisco/Hartfort 2002, cat. no. VII.

**Esaias van de Velde**

Amsterdam 1587 – 1630 The Hague

*Coastal Landscape near Noordwijk*Oil on panel  
61.5 x 100 cm.**Provenance:**Sale Berlin, Lepke, 21 November 1905, lot 111, as Jodocus de Momper  
Amsterdam, Kunsthandel P. de Boer, 1936, as Jan van Goyen  
Germany, private collection, until 2020**Literature:**N.N., *Catalogus van oude schilderijen : nieuwe aanwinsten zomer 1936*, exh. cat. Amsterdam, Kunsthandel P. de Boer  
1936, cat. no. 13, as Jan van Goyen

The *Coastal Landscape near Noordwijk* is an important new discovery that further enriches our understanding of Esaias van de Velde's years of activity in The Hague. It documents this artist's restless mind as he explores new subjects and expands his repertory of landscape themes and motifs. Here, of particular interest are the painter's representations of fire towers and windswept coastal farmsteads. The latter, in particular, assumed a singular afterlife in the paintings and drawings of Jan van Goyen (1596-1656) and Pieter de Molijn (1595-1661), two seminal Dutch landscape artists whose origins may be traced back to Haarlem during the years in which Esaias van de Velde revolutionized Dutch landscape art. To understand the significance of his impact and the way it would shape his subsequent career we initially need to review the importance of the early Haarlem years of Esaias van de Velde.

Esaias van de Velde (1587-1630) was born in Amsterdam in 1587 and baptized on May 17<sup>th</sup> of that year. His family had deep roots in Antwerp but, because of their Protestant faith, chose to emigrate to Amsterdam in the fledgling Dutch Republic. There the young Esaias, presumably first trained by his father, Hans, was also exposed to the important influence of other Flemish emigré artists the most important of whom were Gil-

lis van Coninxloo (1544-1606/07) and David Vinckboons (1576-1631). He would have also witnessed the meteoric rise of the slightly older Claes Jansz Visscher (1586/87-1652) whose early career derived directly from the Vinckboons idiom.

By 1609 Esaias had associations with the city of Haarlem and had settled there permanently by 1610. During his Haarlem years, roughly a decade (1610-mid 1618) Haarlem became a hotbed of talented young artists such as Willem Buytewech (1591/92-1624), Frans Hals (1582/83-1666), Adriaen Brouwer (1603/05-1638) as well as Esaias' cousin, Jan van de Velde II (1593-1641). It was during this period that Esaias played a transformative role in redefining the artistic concept of landscape subject matter. For example, in two signed and dated paintings of 1614 now in Cambridge and Enschede (figs. 1, 2)<sup>1</sup> the artist truly revolutionized Dutch landscape painting. Both pictures represent flat, rather unassuming landscapes one in Winter and the other in Summer. Esaias placed the horizon relatively high, tilted upwards to provide an ample stage in which various people and domestic animals move about. These two landscapes are devoid of idealization and are striking for their matter-of-fact realism.





Fig. 1  
Esaias van de Velde,  
*Winter Landscape*, 1614, oil  
on panel, 21 x 40.6 cm.,  
Cambridge, Fitzwilliam  
Museum



Fig. 2  
Esaias van de Velde, *Riders  
in a Landscape*, 1614, oil  
on panel, 25.1 x 22.5 cm.,  
Enschede, Rijksmuseum  
Twenthe



Fig. 3  
Esaias van de Velde, *Strand-  
ed Whale at the Beach of  
Noordwijk*, 28 December 1614,  
etching, 15.2 x 24.3 cm.,  
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 4  
Esaias van de Velde, *Riders  
and Pedestrians to the right of  
a Swamp*, 1619, oil on panel,  
34.1 x 55.1 cm., Besançon,  
Musée des Beaux-Arts

Van de Velde carries this new formulation of landscape forward in his series of pen sketches, likely from a sketchbook from about 1615-1616.<sup>2</sup> In these drawings he lowers the horizon line considerably. As a result these landscapes become more intimate and are noticeably less bleak in tenor. Esaias continued to refine this concept in his most celebrated series of landscape prints, the *Series of Ten etched Landscapes* which date to about 1615-1616.<sup>3</sup> An important parallel to these landscapes and a significant precursor to *The Coastal Landscape* is Esaias's etching *A Beached Sperm Whale at Noordwijk* which the artist produced soon after the event which took place on December 28, 1614 (fig. 3).<sup>4</sup> Figures from all walks of life have congregated around the beached whale before a treeless dune coastline. Many of the foreground witnesses parade their high fashion in a manner that recalls the contemporaneous dandified figures of Willem Buytewech.

During mid 1618 Esaias moved to The Hague where he sought new stimulus partly through the presence of the stadholder's court even though there is no concrete evidence that he received court patronage directly. A key transitional work mirroring the move to The Hague is Esaias's first chalk sketchbook datable to about 1618-1620.<sup>5</sup> In it he represents subjects such as villages and riverviews at close quarters thereby endowing them with an intimacy enhanced by the artist's spirited, incisive draftsmanship. These



Fig. 5  
Esaias van de Velde,  
*Procession before Abspoel  
Castle*, 1619, oil on  
canvas, 101.6 x 172.7 cm.,  
Minneapolis, Minneapolis  
Institute of Art



Fig. 6  
Esaias van de Velde, *The  
Ferry*, 1622, oil on panel,  
61.5 x 113 cm., Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum

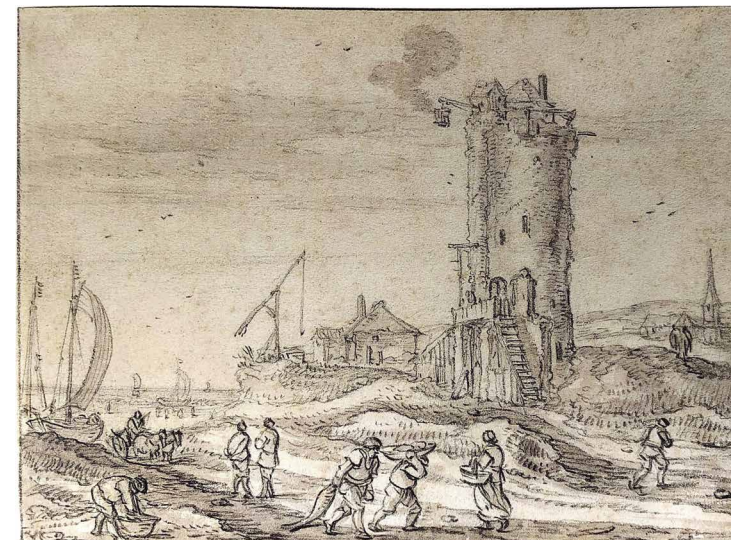


Fig. 7 Esaias van de Velde, *Beached Boats before a Fire Tower*, black chalk and violet wash on paper, 12.4 x 16.7 cm., sale Amsterdam, Sotheby's, 4 November 2003, lot 33

landscapes reveal his delight in the prosperous inhabited landscape well east of the windswept coastal dunes flanking the North Sea. This sense of well-being also pervades certain wooded landscapes of 1619, for example those in Besançon (fig. 4), Boston, and Minneapolis (fig. 5).<sup>6</sup> Elegantly dressed horseback riders amble by pedestrians who, by and large, represent a different, lower strata of society. Nowhere is this more evident than in the large canvas in Minneapolis where peasant children perform antics in their successful effort to secure charitable gifts from members of the courtly retinue. This representation of a wide range of quotidian human activities is perfected by the artist in his masterpiece of 1622, *The Ferry* (fig. 6)<sup>7</sup> now in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

By the mid 1620s this becomes progressively more apparent as manifested in the second chalk sketchbook of about 1624-1625.<sup>8</sup> Unlike the first chalk sketchbook the artist has transformed the mood, if not the character, of his subjects by the addition of accents of pale violet wash. He has also explored a wider range of subjects including the two beach scenes (figures 7, 8)<sup>9</sup> both dominated by fire towers. He also represents two imaginary, rock strewn, hilly subjects of a character far removed from the village scenes, town ramparts and castles that comprised the majority of his chosen subjects. This sketchbook, like its predecessor, displays a restless mind searching for new realms to explore.

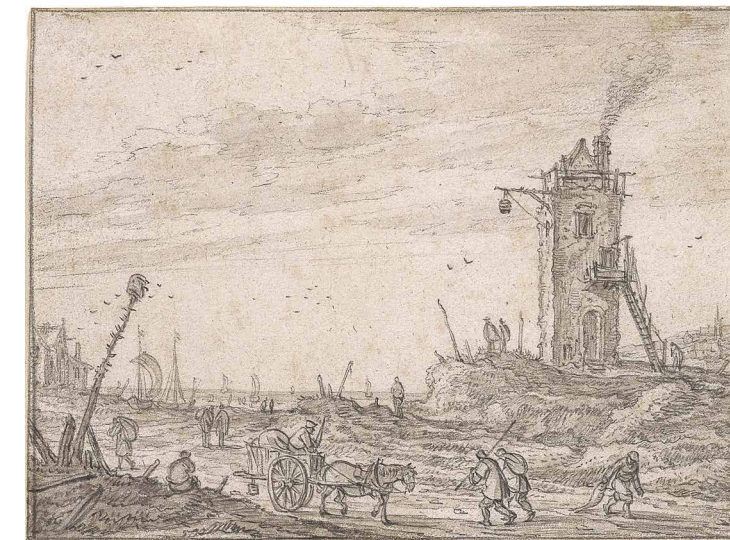


Fig. 8 Esaias van de Velde, *Path before a Fire Tower in the Dunes*, black chalk and violet wash on paper, 12.5 x 16.6 cm., Austin, University of Texas, Blanton Museum of Art

*The Coastal Landscape near Noordwijk*, which probably dates from about 1623-1624, offers many parallels to the second chalk sketchbook, especially the two coastal views with their prominent fire towers cited immediately above. In rethinking his interest in coastal scenes Esaias clearly owes a debt to Hendrick Vroom whose rare coastal subjects include a diverse array of human activities on a vast stage steeply tilted upwards.<sup>10</sup> This applies equally to Esaias's *A Beached Whale between Scheveningen and Katwijk* of 1617 (fig. 9)<sup>11</sup> and to his *Coastal Landscape near Noordwijk*, painted some years later. Yet differences abound between these two pictures. The earlier represents a specific event whereas *The Coastal Landscape near Noordwijk* depicts a wide range of human activities. Certain of these seem interconnected whereas others do not. Of the latter the most conspicuous is the pair of courtly riders in the right foreground. Their commanding presence, like the courtly retinue in the Minneapolis painting of 1619, cannot help but trigger a strong sense of social commentary. These riders are set before the coastal backdrop of the North Sea dunes which in their windswept sparseness seem quite barren and bleak. Yet the beach teems with human activity as people eke out an existence dependent on the bounty of the sea. The coastal dunes also support small hamlets and isolated farm dwellings, identifiable as Noordwijk aan Zee, recognisable from its church (fig. 10). At the centre of the scene is a partially overgrown fire tower, which still serves as a beacon for those who draw their livelihood from the sea. Our pair of courtiers on horseback pass before this spare world but are



Fig. 9  
Esaias van de Velde, *Stranded Whale at the Beach between Katwijk and Scheveningen*, 20/21 January 1617, oil on canvas, 83.7 x 132.1 cm., New Bedford (MA), New Bedford Whaling Museum

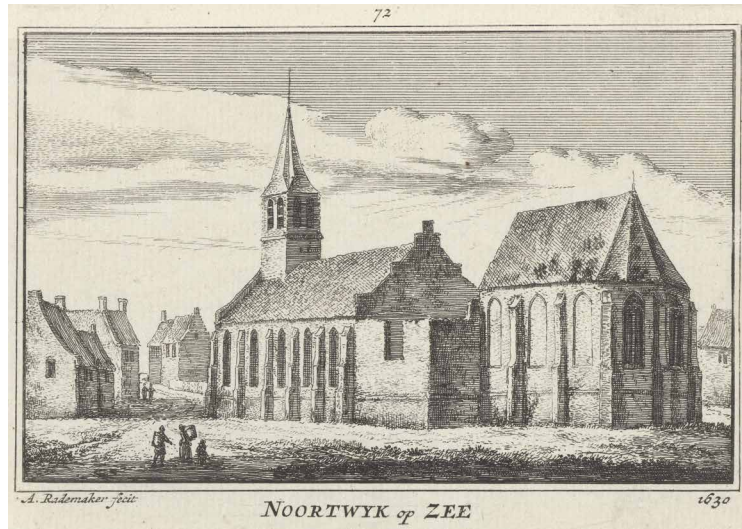


Fig. 10 Abraham Rademaker, *View of Noordwijk aan Zee*, 1630, etching, 8 x 11.5 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

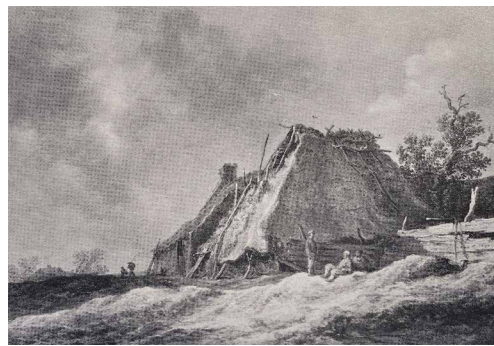


Fig. 11 Jan van Goyen, *Farmstead on the Edge of the Dunes*, 1630, oil on panel, 31 x 51 cm., formerly Amsterdam, Kunsthandel Waterman



Fig. 12 Jan van Goyen, *Farmhouse and Dovecote*, 1653, black chalk and gray wash, 217.7 x 27.3 cm., Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum



Fig. 13 Pieter Molyn, *Cottages and Figures in the Dunes*, 1659, black chalk and gray wash, 19.1 x 27.6 cm., Chapel Hill (NC), University of North Carolina, Ackland Art Museum, The Peck Collection

certainly not part of its in that they inhabit the more luxurious world of far greater abundance a few miles to the east beyond where the high coastal dunes give way to richly cultivated farmland that served the cities of Delft, The Hague, Leiden, and Haarlem.

The second chalk sketchbook mirrors these two worlds and brings us to the threshold of a vast new repertory also clearly spelled out in the *Coastal Landscape near Noordwijk*. Among other subjects, this repertory focuses on the humble farm dwellings or farm complexes nestled in the dunes. This world would have seemed remote yet sufficiently familiar to the prosperous and wealthy burghers of the Dutch Republic who clearly developed an appetite for such subject matter in the paintings of Jan van Goyen (fig 11),<sup>12</sup> Salomon van Ruysdael (1600/03-1670), and Pieter Molyn.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Van Goyen<sup>13</sup> (fig. 12) and especially Molyn<sup>14</sup> (fig 13) produced sizable numbers of finished chalk and wash drawings of these farm scenes which also catered to this taste for isolated, weathered farmsteads. In the broadest sense this interest in rustic dwellings may also be perceived as a precursor of the *picturesque*.

Esaias van de Velde's *Coastal Landscape near Noordwijk* also features such motifs. The two most conspicuous of these are the fire tower, paired as it were, with the dwelling at the right dominated by its windmill. In sum this painting reads as an inventory of architectural and anecdotal motifs interwoven into a beautiful *mélange* of arresting details. The *Coastal Landscape near Noordwijk* offers many parallels to a number of major pictures from the mid 1620s by Jan van Goyen. These truly launched his career as a major landscape painter. The degree to which Esaias van de Velde could have influenced van Goyen is hard to determine as is the possible inspiration that van Goyen may have exerted on the older master who roughly a decade earlier had been his most



Fig. 14 Esaias van de Velde, *Coastal Landscape near Noordwijk*, infrared reflectography showing underdrawing

important teacher. This point of intersection between these two masters at this point in the mid 1620s is fascinating but fleeting. Whereas van Goyen continued to exploit the realistic Dutch landscape into its monochrome phase, Esaias, in his later work shifts his themes to more imaginary subjects inspired, for example, by the mountainous Tyrolian subjects of Roelandt Savery or the Italianate landscape motifs percolating into the Netherlands by the first generation of Dutch Italianate artists upon their return to their native land. Esaias van de Velde was a many-sided artist<sup>15</sup> but his preeminent contribution is to the development of landscape. His *Coastal Landscape near Noordwijk* is – not least in its primary conception (fig. 14) – a remarkable example of his restless and creative mind at a critical moment in his career.<sup>16</sup>

GSK

#### Notes

- 1 G.S. Keyes, *Esaias van de Velde 1587-1630*, Doornspijk 1984, cat. nos. 71, 114, plates 1, 2.
- 2 Keyes 1984, cat. nos. D105, D109, D113, D121-123, D154, D173, D178, plates 15-24.
- 3 Keyes 1984, cat. nos. E10-E19, plates 46-59.
- 4 Keyes 1984, cat. no. E1, pl. 28.
- 5 Keyes 1984, cat. nos. D78, D85, D92, D93, D95, D112, D116, D119, D120, D126, D140, D141, D146, D164, D170, D176, plates 97-112.
- 6 Keyes 1984, cat. nos. 110, 156, 18, plates 82, 84, 123.
- 7 Keyes 1984, cat. no. 104, pl. 116.
- 8 Keyes 1984, cat. nos. D68, D71, D91, D97, D125, D130, D142, D148, D155, D159, D188, D192, D210, D214, plates 183-196.
- 9 Keyes 1984, cat. nos. D210, D214, plates 191, 192.
- 10 L.J. Bol, *Die holländische Marinemalerei des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Braunschweig 1973, p. 14, fig. 7. Other early Dutch marine painters who produced beach scenes include Cornelis Claesz van Wieringen (1575/77-1633) and Adam Willaerts (1577-1664).
- 11 Keyes 1984, cat. no. 19, pl. 125.
- 12 H.-U. Beck, *Jan van Goyen 1596-1656*, 4 vols, Amsterdam/Doornspijk 1972-1991, 2 (1973, the Paintings), cat. nos. P162 (1632), P235 (1625), P1002 (1632), P1074 (1629), P1075 (1629), P1104 (1632), P1141 (1630), all repr.
- 13 Beck 1972-1991, 1 (1972, the Drawings), cat. nos. D184 (1649), D296 (1652), D421 (1653), D615, all repr. It is not clear whether these dune like landscapes represent the coastal dunes or whether van Goyen, on his many excursions on the rivers throughout the low countries, may have drawn equal inspiration from the many heaths which he was also familiar with. Nonetheless, he also produced many beach scenes, which confirmed his familiarity with the coastal dunes as well.
- 14 H.-U. Beck, *Pieter Molyn 1595-1661: Katalog der Handzeichnungen*, Doornspijk 1998, cat. nos. 201 (1652), 207 (1654), 212 (1654), 220 (1654), 302 (1655), 303 (1655) and 333 (1659), all repr.
- 15 For example he painted several garden party subjects and also added elegantly attired figures to the architectural paintings of Bartholomeus van Bassen. Esaias also painted religious subjects and developed a significant specialty in military combats and related violent themes.
- 16 I have not discussed the process by which Esaias composed the remarkable composition of *The Coastal Landscape*. However, one should note that the underdrawing, some of which is visible to the naked eye, is quite extensive. Much of it is notably sketchy whereas certain details such as the boat drawn up onto the beach in the left foreground is fully characterized in the underdrawing. However the artist has shifted this boat considerably from its original, lower location. Esaias has also shifted the angle of the blades of the windmill that dominates the farmstead at the right. The greatest concentration of underdrawing defines the fire tower and its foundations as well as the farmstead at the right. As can also be seen, the human figures are added over the completed landscape with little or no preparatory indications whatsoever.

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## Colophon

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