



**Arent de Gelder**

(Dordrecht 1645 – 1727 Dordrecht)

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No other pupil of Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69) worked more emphatically and longer in the style of his master than the Dordrecht painter Arent de Gelder. De Gelder was Rembrandt's last pupil, and he adopted the master's late expressive style, remaining faithful to it for the rest of his career, even in the face of the prevailing classicizing fashion. Nevertheless, his style displays distinctive features that give it a personal identity. His sense of form was less stable than Rembrandt's, but his palette was more adventurous and colorful. De Gelder also differed from Rembrandt in his effective use of colored grounds and other underlayers of paint.<sup>[1]</sup>

Arent de Gelder was born in Dordrecht on 26 October 1645. His parents were Jan Aertsz de Gelder (b. 1609) and Maria Lotterich, who came from an affluent Dordrecht family.<sup>[2]</sup> Jan Aertsz started out as a cooper of wine barrels. In 1638 he succeeded his father as the caretaker of the West-Indisch Huis, located on the Wijnstraat from where, as a merchant, he also conducted business with Brazil. The family lived there as well until 1686, when they moved to another house on the same street. The De Gelders prospered, and Arent's father became a wealthy and well-respected citizen. In 1664 he held the highest position in a militia company, and in 1667 he was appointed dean of the Coopers' Guild—a position usually reserved for regents—which he would hold for six consecutive years.<sup>[3]</sup> From 1672 on he also sat on various municipal councils that were involved in appointing the city fathers.

De Gelder first trained under his fellow townsman Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627–78), who was in Dordrecht between 1656, when he returned from Vienna, and 1662, when he left for England.<sup>[4]</sup> It is difficult to pinpoint when exactly De Gelder first entered Van Hoogstraten's workshop, where he was introduced to the “de gronden van de schilderkonst” (the rudiments of painting).<sup>[5]</sup> This may have been around 1660, when he turned fifteen, though it is possible that it was earlier, considering that his near contemporary fellow pupil Godefridus Schalcken (1643–1706) was already working with Van Hoogstraten in 1656, the year of his thirteenth birthday.<sup>[6]</sup> Van Hoogstraten's departure for England would explain why De Gelder and Schalcken had to find a new teacher to complete their training. According to Houbraken, De Gelder headed to Amsterdam “to learn how to paint in Rembrandt's manner,”<sup>[7]</sup> and spent two years with the master before returning to Dordrecht for good. Assuming that De Gelder went to Amsterdam shortly after Van Hoogstraten's departure, his tutelage with Rembrandt would have taken place between the summer of 1662 and the summer of 1664. Although Rembrandt generally gave his pupils great freedom in assisting him in his paintings, De Gelder's hand cannot be discerned in any of the master's works from the first half of the 1660s.<sup>[8]</sup> What De Gelder did there during these years is still unclear. The first concrete sign of his independence is his earliest dated painting of 1667, a depiction of *Judah and Tamar*, a subject he would later revisit a number of times (see *Judah and Tamar* in The Leiden Collection).<sup>[9]</sup> Like Rembrandt, De Gelder painted, in addition to portraits, almost exclusively history scenes.

Back in Dordrecht, De Gelder, who never married, moved in with his parents on the Wijnstraat, as his only brother, the lawyer Johan de Gelder (1650–1727), would also later do. From there he took part in the city's artistic and social life. Judging from extant portraits and documents, it would appear that he profited greatly from his father's social standing, and his own prestige rose as well. He received commissions from members of the highest circles in Dordrecht and joined the civic guard, moving up through the ranks and serving as captain between 1694 and 1711.

Arnold Houbraken (1660–1719) writes that De Gelder and the woodcarver Hendrik Noteman (1654–1737) visited the Hague painter Augustin Terwesten (1649–1711) when he was painting “een kamer in het rond” (the walls of a room) in the house of burgomaster Barthoud van Slingelandt (1654–1711) in Dordrecht. Terwesten, however, had little time for



them.<sup>[10]</sup> De Gelder and Noteman were close friends, and De Gelder's painted portrait of the woodcarver has been preserved.<sup>[11]</sup> Schalcken also portrayed the woodcarver (twice), but these likenesses have been lost. De Gelder, moreover, was well acquainted with the amateur painter and printseller Jacob Moelaert (1649–1727), a pupil of Nicolaes Maes (1634–93). At his death in 1727, Moelaert left De Gelder three albums of prints and drawings, including one with work by Rembrandt.

De Gelder died suddenly on 27 August of that same year, less than a month after Moelaert. According to Weyerman, he had planned to go for a ride (“te gaan speelenryden”) that morning with friends, but they found him, dead, at home.<sup>[12]</sup> His estate included close to 190 paintings, mostly history scenes.<sup>[13]</sup> Yet we only know with certainty that “twenty-two pictures depicting the Passion of Christ” in the *schildercamer* (studio) were painted by De Gelder.<sup>[14]</sup> Houbraken mentions them specifically and informs us that twenty of the works in this series had already been completed in 1715. On 30 September 1727, an auction was announced in the *Amsterdamsche Courant* of all the paintings left behind by “the late Arent de Gelder, the only pupil of Rembrandt who faithfully followed his famous master in painting.”<sup>[15]</sup>

- Piet Bakker, 2017

## Endnotes

1. Ernst van de Wetering, “Opmerkingen over de relatie tussen techniek, stijl en toeval bij Arent de Gelder; een vergelijking met Rembrandt,” in *Arent de Gelder (1645–1727), Rembrandts laatste leerling*, ed. Dirck Bijker et al. (Exh. cat. Dordrecht, Dordrechts Museum; Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum) (Ghent, 1998), 19–35.
2. Unless otherwise noted, all biographical information on Arent the Gelder is taken from Gabriël Pastoor, “The Life of Arent de Gelder,” in *Arent de Gelder, Dordrecht 1645–1727*, ed. Joachim Wolfgang von Moltke (Doornspijk, 1994).
3. Gabriël Pastoor, “The Life of Arent de Gelder,” in *Arent de Gelder, Dordrecht 1645–1727*, ed. Joachim Wolfgang von Moltke (Doornspijk, 1994), 2n13.
4. See the biography of Samuel van Hoogstraten in this catalogue.
5. Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1718–21; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), 3: 206.
6. De Gelder is generally assumed to have studied under Van Hoogstraten for two years. This may have been based on Houbraken’s comment that De Gelder learned “de gronden van de schilderkunst” (rudiments of painting) from Van Hoogstraten, though nowhere does he mention that this took exactly two years; Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1718–21; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), 3: 206. Therefore, it is possible that De Gelder’s tutelage under Van Hoogstraten was longer. The apprenticeship of a minor could sometimes last seven years. Houbraken reports that De Gelder went to Amsterdam “om Rembrants wijze van schilderen te leeren” (to learn how to paint in Rembrandt’s manner); Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1718–21; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), 3: 206. Taking Houbraken’s comment literally, one could posit that De Gelder had completed his actual training. In that case, it would certainly have lasted longer than two years. See Ronald de Jager, “Meester, leerjongen, leertijd: Een analyse van zeventiende-eeuwse Noord-Nederlandse leerlingencontracten van kunstschilders, goud- en zilversmeden,” in *Oud Holland* 104 (1990): 69–71. On the various stages of an apprenticeship, see also Marion Goosens, “Schilders en de markt, Haarlem 1600–1635” (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2001), 77–83.
7. “om Rembrants wijze van schilderen te leeren.” Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1718–21; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), 3: 206. According to Schatborn, De Gelder was with Rembrandt already in 1661. As proof, he puts forth a drawing by De Gelder of 1661 that is strongly influenced by dated work by Rembrandt from 1661–63. Peter Schatborn, “Tekeningen van Arent de Gelder,” in *Arent de Gelder (1645–1727), Rembrandts laatste leerling*, ed. Dirck Bijker et al. (Exh. cat. Dordrecht, Dordrechts

- Museum; Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum) (Ghent, 1998), 111.
8. Peter Schoon, "Arent de Gelder (1645–1727), 'de beste Leerling die Rembrandt teelde by de adelijke Schilderkonst,'" in *Arent de Gelder (1645–1727), Rembrandts laatste leerling*, ed. Dirck Bijcker et al. (Exh. cat. Dordrecht, Dordrechts Museum; Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum) (Ghent, 1998), 14.
  9. *Judah and Tamar*, signed and dated 1667 (Private Collection); Werner Sumowski, *Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schüler*. Vol. 2, *G. van den Eeckhout – I. de Joudreville* (Landau, 1983), 1161, no. 728; Joachim Wolfgang von Moltke, ed., *Arent de Gelder, Dordrecht 1645–1727* (Doornspijk, 1994), 65, no. 11, pl. V (color), pl. 11; Dirck Bijker, et al., *Arent de Gelder (1645–1727), Rembrandts laatste leerling* (Exh. cat. Dordrecht, Dordrechts Museum; Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum) (Ghent, 1998), 126–27, no. 2.
  10. Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1718–21; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam 1980), 3: 268.
  11. *Portrait of Hendrik Noteman (1656–1734)*, signed and dated 1698 (Dordrechts Museum). Werner Sumowski, *Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schüler*. Vol. 2, *G. van den Eeckhout – I. de Joudreville* (Landau, 1983), 1178, no. 806, 1266; Joachim Wolfgang von Moltke, ed., *Arent de Gelder, Dordrecht 1645–1727* (Doornspijk, 1994), 101, no. 101; Peter Marijnissen et al., *De Zichtbaere Werelt, schilderkunst uit de Gouden Eeuw in Hollands oudste stad* (Exh. cat. Dordrecht, Dordrechts Museum) (Zwolle, 1992), 170–72, no. 37; Dirck Bijker et al., eds., *Arent de Gelder (1645–1727), Rembrandts laatste leerling* (Exh. cat. Dordrecht, Dordrechts Museum; Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum) (Ghent, 1998), 190–91, no. 30.
  12. Jacob Campo Weyerman, *De levensbeschryvingen der Nederlandsche konstschilders en konstschilderessen* (The Hague, 1729), 3: 44.
  13. See Regionaal Archief Dordrecht, Notarial Archives, Notary A. Cant, inv. 84, fol. 269–91v, 29 August 1727. For a transcription of this extremely extensive inventory with all of the paintings, see Joachim Wolfgang von Moltke, ed., *Arent de Gelder, Dordrecht 1645–1727* (Doornspijk, 1994), 200–4.
  14. "22 stukken schilderijen, verbeeldende de passie Christi." See Regionaal Archief Dordrecht, Notarial Archives, Notary A. Cant, inv. 84, fol. 280, fol. 269–91v, 29 August 1727.
  15. "Arent de Gelder, zalr., d'eenigste Discipel die zynen beroemden Meester Rembrant stiptelyk in de Schilderkonst naer gevolgt heeft."

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