THE LEIDEN COLLECTION

Gerard ter Borch the Elder

(Zwolle 1582/83 – 1662 Zwolle)

How to cite

McCarthy, Alexa J. “Gerard ter Borch the Elder” (2017). In *The Leiden Collection Catalogue*, 4th ed. Edited by Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. and Elizabeth Nogrady with Caroline Van Cauwenberge. New York, 2023–. https://theleidencollection.com/artists/gerard-ter-borch-the-elder/ (accessed November 19, 2026).

A PDF of every version of this biography is available in this Online Catalogue's Archive, and the Archive is managed by a permanent URL. New versions are added only when a substantive change to the narrative occurs.

© 2026 The Leiden Collection

Gerard ter Borch the Elder began his artistic training in his native Zwolle, likely under Arent van Bolten (1573–before 1633). At the age of 18, in 1600 or 1601, Gerard the Elder traveled to Southern Europe, where he would stay until about 1612.[1] During this period, the artist lived in Rome and Naples, producing the atmospheric *vedute*, or carefully rendered depictions of Italian landscapes and architectural monuments, for which he is best known. These drawings, most of which are dated between 1607 and 1610, comprised a sketchbook that Gerard the Elder brought back with him to the Netherlands, where it was later disassembled.[2]

By mid–1612, Gerard the Elder had returned to Zwolle. There, he married Anna Bufkens (1587–1621), the mother of artist Gerard ter Borch the Younger (1617–81).[3] Gerard the Elder's drawings from the 1610s represent expressive depictions of Old and New Testament subjects, as well as mythological scenes, which depart from the carefully executed draftsmanship of his Italian period. By the early 1620s, Gerard the Elder's artistic output began to decrease. In 1621, he assumed the role of his aged father, the license-master of Zwolle, a position Gerard the Elder would hold for about 40 years.[4] That same year, he married his second wife, Geesken van Voerst (1599–1628). With Van Voerst, Gerard the Elder had two daughters, Sara, born in 1622, and Anna, born in 1624.[5] In addition, he would have nine children with his third wife, Wiesken Matthys (1607–83), among them Gesina (1631–90), who was born in 1631.[6] Despite his professional responsibilities, Gerard the Elder continued to pursue some artistic activity, focusing his attentions on the talents of his offspring and capturing them in a group of figure studies from the 1630s, to which the Leiden Collection's *Little Girl at a Table Holding a Slice of Melon* belongs.[7]

- Alexa J. McCarthy, 2017

© 2026 The Leiden Collection

Endnotes

1. On Gerard ter Borch the Elder's biography, see Alison McNeil Kettering, *Drawings from the Ter Borch Studio Estate*, 2 vols. (The Hague, 1988) and Alison McNeil Kettering, "Gerard [Gerhard] ter Borch (i)," *Grove Art Online*: *Oxford Art Online*, accessed 28 October 2016.
2. Alison McNeil Kettering, *Drawings from the Ter Borch Studio Estate* (The Hague, 1988) 1: 5. See also J.M. Blok, "Romeinsche teekeningen door G. Terborch, Sr. en W. van Nieulandt II in 's Rijksprentenkabinet te Amsterdam," *Mededelingen van het Nederlands Historisch Instituut te Rome* 5 (1925): 128–129 and I.Q. van Regteren Altena, *Vereeuwigde Stad Rome door Nederlanders Getekend 1500–1900* (Wormerveer, 1964).
3. Gerard ter Borch the Younger's work is well-represented in the Leiden Collection. See the entries of his *Musical Company* of ca. 1642–1644, and his portraits of the four older Craeyvanger Children executed in ca. 1658 in this catalogue.
4. Alison McNeil Kettering, *Drawings from the Ter Borch Studio Estate* (The Hague, 1988) 2: 5, Appendix II, A I.
5. Alison McNeil Kettering, *Drawings from the Ter Borch Studio Estate* (The Hague, 1988), 1: 107.
6. Gesina would preserve the family estate, which included her own drawings and poetry books, as well as drawings by her father and her siblings.
7. See the entry in this catalogue.

Literature

- Bertolotti, Antonino. *Artisti begli ed olandesi a Roma nei secoli XVI e XVII.* Florence, 1880.
- Egger, Hermann. *Römische Veduten: Handzeichnungen aus dem XV.– XCIII. Jahrhundert.* 2 vols. Vienna, 1911.
- Blok, J.M. "Romeinsche teekeningen door G. Terborch, Sr. en W. van Nieulandt II in 's Rijksprentenkabinet te Amsterdam." *Mededelingen van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome* 5 (1925): 128–36.
- Van Regteren Altena, I.Q. *Vereeuwigde Stad Rome door Nederlanders getekend 1500–1900.* Wormerveer, 1964.
- Snoep, D.P. "Een 17de eeuws liedboek met tekeningen van Gerard ter Borch de Oude en Pieter en Roeland van Laer." *Simiolus* 3 (1968/69): 77–134.
- Judson, J. Richard. "Jacob Isaacz. van Swanenburgh and the Phlegraean Fields." In *Essays*

© 2026 The Leiden Collection

in Northern European Art Presented to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann on His Sixtienth Birthday. Edited by Anne-Marie Logan, 119–22. Doornspijk, 1983.

- Kettering, Alison McNeil. *Drawings from the Ter Borch Studio Estate.* 2 vols. The Hague, 1988.
- Kettering, Alison McNeil. “Gerard [Gerhard] ter Borch (i).” *Grove Art Online: Oxford Art Online.* Accessed 28 October 2016.

© 2026 The Leiden Collection