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Gerard ter Borch the Younger

(Zwolle 1617 – 1681 Deventer)

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Gerard ter Borch the Younger was born in Zwolle in 1617. His parents were the draftsman Gerard ter Borch the Elder (1582/83–1662) and Anna Bufkens (1587–1621).[1] Before marrying, Gerard the Elder sojourned in Italy, chiefly in Rome and Naples, from 1600 to 1607. Testifying to his trip are drawings he made of ancient ruins in the style of Paul Bril (1553/54–1626). In 1621, after Ter Borch's mother died, his father took a second wife, Geesken van Voerst (1599–1628), whose brother was the well-known engraver Robert van Voerst (1597–1636). Soon thereafter Gerard the Elder was awarded the lucrative office of license-master. He did not give up drawing entirely, however, as is evidenced by his contribution to a songbook, on which the Haarlem painter Pieter van Laer (1599–1642) also worked.[2] In 1628, Gerard the Elder, by then a widower again, took a third wife, Wiesken Matthys (1607–83) from Deventer; the couple had three children: Gesina (1631–90), Harmen (1638–77), and Moses (1645–67) who, like their half-brother, inherited their father's artistic talent.

Gerard the Younger received his first artistic instruction from his father in Zwolle. In 1632, at the age of fifteen, he was already in Amsterdam, although it is not known with whom he lodged.[3] In 1634, he moved to Haarlem to study under the renowned landscape painter Pieter Molyn (1600–61). He completed his training the following year, whereupon he joined the Haarlem Guild of Saint Luke. His stay in Haarlem did not last long, for—as emerges from a letter his father wrote him—Ter Borch was in London in the summer of 1635.[4] The younger Ter Borch lived with his step-uncle Robert van Voerst, who shortly before had been appointed as engraver to Charles I (1600–49).[5] His stay in London was brief, however; presumably after a quick stopover in Antwerp, he was back in Zwolle in the spring of 1636, where he seems to have wanted to settle down for an extended period.[6]

Despite those intentions, Ter Borch was soon once again traveling beyond the borders of the Dutch Republic. Houbraken noted correctly that from the moment that "[Ter Borch] could stand on his own two feet, he was consumed with wanderlust and visited foreign countries."[7] It is highly unlikely that Ter Borch went to Italy as his father did, and all of the arguments put forward in support of such a journey ultimately prove untenable.[8] Stronger indications exist for a sojourn in Spain. A line in a poem occasioned by Ter Borch's marriage suggests that his work was esteemed at the court in Madrid and that the king himself sat for the artist.[9] Although this portrait is no longer extant, an autograph replica seems to confirm this account. Alongside the small portrait of the Spanish king, the influence of Diego Velázquez (1599–1660) on Ter Borch's work also points to a stay in Madrid. Whether the two ever actually met is unknown, but several portraits Ter Borch painted shortly after he returned to the Republic suggest that he had seen Velázquez's work.[10] That his stay at the Spanish court should be dated to the end of the 1630s and not, as Houbraken supposes, after the signing of the Peace of Münster in 1648, is confirmed by the (at the time) fashionable costume worn by Philip IV (1605–65) in Ter Borch's replica.[11]

It is not known how long Ter Borch stayed in Spain, but he was certainly back in the Republic around 1640, although in which city is difficult to determine. Several collaborative works with his teacher Pieter Molyn suggest that he had settled in Haarlem. Portraits of a few Amsterdam regents, however, point to Amsterdam, as do his guardroom scenes in the manner of Pieter Codde (1599–1678) and Willem Duyster (1598/99–1635) from the same time.[12] It was probably thanks to Ter Borch's Amsterdam connections that he was invited to join the Dutch delegation brokering the peace treaty with Spain in Münster as of 1645. There, he became acquainted with Gaspar de Bracamonte y Guzman (ca. 1595–1676), Count of Peñeranda, and leader of the Spanish delegation, who sat for Ter Borch, a commission he doubtless owed to his earlier

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experience in Spain.[13] According to Houbraken, "This portrait, to which he applied exceptional diligence and which was also well done, gave him not only the opportunity to paint for the count, but also for all of the ambassadors who had gathered at the peace negotiations."[14] Among the ambassadors must also be counted the Dutch negotiators, as Ter Borch portrayed Adriaen Pauw (1585–1653), Adriaan Clant van Stedum (1599–1665), and Godard van Reede (1588–1648) as well.[15]

After the treaty was signed, Ter Borch returned to the Republic, stopping in Brussels, where he received a gold chain with a metal bearing an image of the Spanish kings.[16] Once again, it is difficult to determine just where he settled, although it may have been in Zwolle. If so, he nevertheless traveled regularly from there. For instance, Ter Borch's equestrian portrait of Elector Palatine Charles Louis (1617–80)[17] was executed in The Hague in 1649. In 1650, he was paid one hundred guilders for twenty-three prints by the town council of Kampen.[18] Three years later, he surfaced in Delft, where he jointly signed a document with painter Johannes Vermeer (1632–75).[19] Also originating around this time is Ter Borch's famous portrait of Jan van Goyen (1596–1656), who sat for him in The Hague. In the first half of the 1650s, Ter Borch painted the likenesses of Willem Everwijn (1617–73) and his wife in Arnhem.[20] Everwijn was a license-master in Arnhem and thus held the same post as the artist's father. Moreover, Everwijn was the brother-in-law of Abraham Tulleken, who was appointed guardian to Caspar Netscher (ca. 1639–84) after the death of both his parents.[21] The Tullekens and Everwijns were closely related to the Craeyvanger family, for whom Ter Borch later painted several portraits together with Netscher, who would become his pupil.[22]

When Netscher went to study under Ter Borch in the mid-1650s, the latter was living in Deventer, where he had married his step-aunt Geertruit Matthys (1612–72) in 1654. At least for some time, this seems to have spelled an end to his wanderings, and he was granted partial citizenship the following year. In 1666, he was appointed a *gemeensman*, or representative of one of the eight wards, and thus exerted influence on the town council, although he never made it as far as alderman or burgomaster. This new position most certainly helped him secure the commission for a large group portrait of the entire Deventer town council in 1667.[23] He also portrayed several Deventer regents.[24] Although Ter Borch had settled in the city, he continued to travel for portrait commissions. In 1670, for instance, he painted the portraits of the Amsterdam mayor Nicolaes Pancras (1622–78) and his son Gerbrand (1658–1716).[25] The events of the *Rampjaar* of 1672 also likely led to Ter Borch's temporary move from Deventer to Amsterdam.[26] Between 1673 and 1675, he received multiple portrait commissions from the Amsterdam regent family De Graeff.[27] During this time, he probably stayed with brother-in-law Sybrant Schellinger (1645–86/90), an Amsterdam merchant and the husband of Gerard's sister Jenneke (1640–75). Not long after the occupation forces withdrew from Deventer on 3 May 1674, Ter Borch had returned to the city. He died in Deventer on 8 December 1681, and at his express request his body was transferred to Zwolle, so that he could be buried next to his father in the St. Michaelskerk.

Although portraits constitute a substantial share of Ter Borch's oeuvre, today he is best known as a highly innovative genre painter. Upon his return from Münster, the guardroom scenes with soldiers at rest or playing cards in the manner of Codde and Duyster gave way to the tranquil interiors of middle-class dwellings, in which he foregrounded ordinary people going about their daily affairs. He was the first Dutch painter to develop this kind of imagery, which he did entirely independently. After settling in Deventer, he radically changed the genre yet again by replacing the average citizens with members of the elite presented in all their finery and ostentatious wealth and engaged in activities in keeping with the social mores of their class. Ter Borch remained active on the Dutch art market, and works by him can be found in the

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major cities of the Netherlands. This widespread dissemination of his art explains, in part, the significant influence he exerted on other leading genre painters, such as Gabriel Metsu (1629–67), Pieter de Hooch (1629–84), Frans van Mieris (1635–81), and Vermeer.

- Piet Bakker, 2017; revised in 2020

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Endnotes

1. Unless otherwise noted, all biographical information on Gerard ter Borch the Younger is taken from Sturla J. Gudlaugsson, *Geraert ter Borch* (The Hague, 1959), vol. 1.
2. See the biography of Pieter van Laer in this catalogue. See also D.P. Snoep, "Een 17de eeuws Liedboek met tekeningen van Gerard ter Borch de Oude en Pieter van Laer," *Simiolus* 3 (1968/69): 77–134.
3. From a letter by Gerard the Elder to his son, it can be deduced that the younger Gerard was in Amsterdam before the summer of 1635. That this took place already in 1632 emerges from the study of a head by Ter Borch with the inscription "in Amsterdam 1632." See Ernst Wilhelm Moes, "Gerard ter Borch en zijne familie," *Oud Holland* 4 (1886): 150; see also note 4.
4. This letter was first published in J.I. van Doorninck, "Het schildersgeslacht ter Borch," in *Verzameling van stucken die betrekking hebben tot Overijsselsch Regt en Geschiedenis* (1883), 10–11. See also "Letter from Gerard ter Borch the Elder to His Son, 3 July 1635," in *Gerard ter Borch, ed.* Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. (Exh. cat. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art; Detroit, Detroit Institute of Arts; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (Zwolle, 2004), 187–89.
5. In London, Van Voerst worked closely with Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641), who included Van Voerst's portrait in *The Iconology*. The engraver and his brother, Reinder, succumbed to the plague before October 1636. This epidemic may have been responsible for Ter Borch's sudden departure.
6. This emerges from the purchase, in April and June 1636, of panels from a cabinetmaker and the inventory of a workshop by "Meyster Gerardt de Schilder" (Master Gerard, the painter). The goods are all in Deventer, but one of the documents mentions explicitly that they were dispatched to Zwolle. In theory, this painter could also have been the elder Gerard; however, in 1636 he was no longer active as a draftsman and/or painter. J. Lugard Jr., "Gerardt de schilder," *Oud Holland* 53 (1936): 136–37. See also Sturla J. Gudlauggson, *Geraert ter Borch* (The Hague, 1960), 2: 16.
7. "[Ter Borch] op eigen wieken kon dryven, hy reislustig was, en vreemde landen heeft bezocht." Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1718–21; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), 3: 34.
8. Sturla J. Gudlauggson, *Geraert ter Borch* (The Hague, 1960), 2: 17. See also Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "The Artistic Development of Gerard ter Borch," in *Gerard ter Borch*, ed. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. (Exh. cat. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art; Detroit, Detroit Institute of Arts; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (Zwolle, 2004), 8.
9. This poem was recited by the Zwolle schoolteacher Joost Hermansz Roldanus at the wedding of Gerard ter Borch and Geertruit Matthys in Deventer in 1654. Sturla J. Gudlauggson, *Geraert ter Borch* (The Hague, 1959), 1: 9.
10. For example, see Ter Borch's portrait of two unknown gentlemen and two unknown ladies, which he painted around 1640. Sturla J. Gudlauggson, *Geraert ter Borch* (The Hague, 1959–60), 1: 190–93; 2:

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61–63, nos. 16–19. See also Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., ed., *Gerard ter Borch* (Exh. cat. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art; Detroit, Detroit Institute of Arts; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (Zwolle, 2004), 9, 53–59, nos. 4–6.

11. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., ed., *Gerard ter Borch* (Exh. cat. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art; Detroit, Detroit Institute of Arts; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (Zwolle, 2004), 8–10.

12. For example, his likeness of the famous Amsterdam alderman and burgomaster Jan Six (1618–1700), among others. Sturla J. Gudlauggson, *Gerard ter Borch* (The Hague, 1959–60), 1: 72; 2: 212, no. 39. For one of Ter Borch's guardroom scenes, see the entry *Guardroom Interior with Soldiers Smoking and Playing Cards* in this catalogue.

13. Sturla J. Gudlauggson, *Geraert ter Borch* (The Hague, 1959–60), 1: 222; 2: 81, no. 56.

14. "Dit pourtret, waar toe hy inzonderheit zyn vlyt aangewend had, en het geen wel gelukt was, gaf hem niet alleen gelegentheit om nog andere meer voor de Graaf te schilderen, maar ook alle de Ambassadeurs, welke op den Vredehandel byeen gekomen waren." Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1718–21; rev. ed.,The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), 34.

15. Sturla J. Gudlauggson, *Gerard ter Borch* (The Hague, 1959–60), 1: 213, 216; 2: 73–74, no. 41, 77–78, nos. 46-47.

16. According to Houbraken, Ter Borch headed to Madrid when the negotiations ended. The Spanish envoys were so delighted with the portraits that they encouraged Ter Borch to enter into the service of the Spanish court in Madrid. Houbraken relates that the artist took this invitation to heart and as "proof" of Ter Borch's acceptance, referring to "een gouden keten met een Medalje, waar op de Beeltenis des Konings, gestempelt was" (a gold chain with a medal bearing a likeness of the king). Ter Borch did, indeed, own such a chain. He did not receive it in Madrid, however, but in Brussels, where after the peace had been closed in Münster he resigned from the Spanish service. See Sturla J. Gudlauggson, *Gerard ter Borch* (The Hague, 1959), 1: 20.

17. Jan Lievens (1607–74) had portrayed Charles Louis as a child in 1629; see the biography of Jan Lievens in this catalogue.

18. Sturla J. Gudlauggson, *Gerard ter Borch* (The Hague, 1959), 1: 20.

19. John Michael Montias, *Vermeer and His Milieu: A Web of Social History* (Princeton, 1989), 102–4, 308, doc. 251. See also the biography of Johannes Vermeer in this catalogue.

20. Sturla J. Gudlauggson, *Gerard ter Borch* (The Hague, 1959–60), 1: 262; 2: 113–14, nos. 103–4.

21. Following Houbraken, Wieseman calls Ter Borch a cousin of Willem Everwijn, though the basis for this is unknown. Houbraken incorrectly calls him Willem Wynand. Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1718–21; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), 3: 73; Marjorie E. Wieseman, *Casper Netscher* (Doornspijk, 2002), 24.

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22. See Ariane van Suchtelen and Menno Potjer, “De Arnhemse familie Craeyvanger—een bijzondere groep 10 portretten door Paulus Lesire, Gerard ter Borch en Caspar Netscher,” *Oud Holland* 127, no. 1 (2014): 7–24. See also the biographies of Caspar Netscher and Paulus Lesire (1612–1654/56), as well as *Portrait of Willem Craeyvanger & Portrait of Christine van der Wart* and the portraits of the *Craeyvanger Children* in this catalogue.
23. Sturla J. Gudlauggson, *Gerard ter Borch* (The Hague, 1959–60), 1: 345; 2: 194–95, no. 205.
24. Alison McNeil Kettering, “Gerard ter Borch’s Portraits for the Deventer Elite,” *Simiolus* 27 (1999): 46–69.
25. Sebastien A.C. Dudok van Heel, “In presentie van de Heer Gerard ter Borgh,” in *Essays on Northern European Art Presented to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Anne-Marie S. Logan (Doornspijk, 1983), 66–67.
26. In the *Rampjaar* 1672, troops from Cologne and Münster occupied Deventer, and Ter Borch was part of the faction that under no circumstances wanted to surrender. Nevertheless, when the city fell that year, Ter Borch had already deserted it. Sebastien A.C. Dudok van Heel, “In presentie van de Heer Gerard ter Borgh,” in *Essays on Northern European Art Presented to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Anne-Marie S. Logan (Doornspijk, 1983), 70.
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