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Pieter Cornelisz van Slingelandt

(Leiden 1640 – 1691 Leiden)

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Pieter van Slingelandt was baptized in the Hooglandse Kerk in Leiden on 4 November 1640. He was the eldest son of the mason Cornelis Pietersz van Slingelandt and Trijntje van Polanen, a cobbler's daughter.[1] The painter came from a milieu of craftsmen: one of his uncles was also a mason, and another one a cloth shearer.[2] Pieter's father was not without means.[3] Pieter was the only one of his nine siblings who never married, and he probably lived at home with his parents until 1678.

Thanks to the Leiden chronicler Simon van Leeuwen (1626–82) we know the identity of Van Slingelandt's teacher. Writing about "den vermaarden Gerrit Douw" ("the renowned Gerrit Dou") in his city description of 1672, he noted that the master "does not hide [his art] from any of his pupils who have talent, as can be seen from the stellar rise and flourishing progress of Frans van Mieris (1635–81) and Pieter van Slingelandt, who because of their excellence are expected to equal and possibly surpass their master."[4] According to Arnold Houbraken (1660–1719), Van Slingelandt did eclipse his teacher, although some reservations can be detected in his final conclusion. He had seen paintings "that in terms of elaboration and refinement transcend those by his master; yet there are also some which, having received the same treatment, are somewhat stiff. Still, he was a great artistic light."[5] The painter, by whom signed portraits from 1653 and 1656 are known,[6] entered the Leiden Guild of Saint Luke in 1661 and paid his annual dues with a few interludes until 1681.[7] He was a prominent guild member and served as headman and dean in 1690 and in 1691.

Van Slingelandt's portraits and genre paintings emulate Gerrit Dou's (1613–75) style, and, like his master, his pictures commanded high prices. In 1663, when he had only just begun to work independently, the French diplomat Balthasar de Monconys (1611–65) complained in his travel journal that Van Slingelandt had charged him 400 guilders for a small painting.[8] He was not the only one who balked at paying Van Slingelandt's steep prices. Between 1678 and 1680 the painter waged a notorious court case against the heirs of François Meerman (1630–72), who was in his lifetime the secretary of Leiden. They refused to pay Van Slingelandt 1,500 guilders for a modest-sized family portrait that had been agreed upon with the secretary more than ten years earlier.[9] According to Houbraken, Van Slingelandt worked on this 1668 portrait for three years, which is confirmed by the existing testimony.[10] Contributing to the high price will undoubtedly have been the many changes Meerman had Van Slingelandt make to the painting. Moreover, his laborious work method will have played a role as well: Houbraken "had been told in all truth" that while working on this portrait, Van Slingelandt had spent "a month or six weeks painting a jabot with lace."[11] Incidentally, the asking price seems to have been disputed only by the patrons. Van Slingelandt's brother-in-law, a bargeman operating regularly to and from Utrecht, testified that on a boat trip to Bodegraven several years before his death, Dou had confided to him that Van Slingelandt "had been greatly wronged by Mr. Meerman" and "the virtuoso manner in which he had portrayed the eldest of the two children alone was worth one thousand guilders and that it was exceptionally skillfully painted."[12] The long, drawn-out conflict was finally settled in 1680, when the Court of Holland largely ruled against Meerman's heirs, ordering them to pay the painter 1,200 guilders.

From the testimony, moreover, it emerges that Van Slingelandt's workshop was thriving around 1670. The Mennonite cloth merchant Cornelis van Houck recalled the case of Meerman's portrait well because it had greatly delayed the completion of his own likeness and that of his wife and his niece/cousin. The merchant also cancelled a commission on behalf of another patron who felt that the painter was too caught up in the Meerman portrait affair. Van Houck ultimately received his portraits, which were listed in his estate in 1684.[13] He must have had a special bond with the painter, for he

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ordered other works and, moreover, Van Houck and the painter Johannes Hannot (1633–84)—the same person who in 1665 rented a room to Johan de Bye to display his Dou collection[14]—stood surety for Van Slingelandt during his lawsuit against Meerman's heirs.[15]

Several dozen portraits by Van Slingelandt are known, only a few subjects of which can be identified. Among them are various members of the Van Musschenbroek family, including the brothers Samuel (1639–82) and Johan (1660–1707), who were successful scientific instrument makers.[16] Johan Hulshout, secretary of the Rhineland Hoogheemraadschap, and his wife Anna Splinter also found their way to the artist's workshop.[17] Van Slingelandt, therefore, was not lacking in patrons. However, his extant oeuvre is relatively small. This can be explained by his slow work method, which was also detrimental to his income; according to Houbraken, "his time-consuming manner of working earned [him] more fame than money."[18] Pieter Cornelisz van Slingelandt died on 7 November 1691 and was buried in the Hooglandse Kerk between 10 and 16 November.[19]

- Piet Bakker, 2017

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Endnotes

1. According to Arnold Houbraken, the painter was born on the Oude Vest in Leiden on 20 October 1640. Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1718–21; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), 3: 126. His year of birth was thought to be incorrect on the basis of the 1653 portraits of Jan Hubrecht and his wife Anna Ghijs (both Private Collection) and a self-portrait from 1656 (Musée du Louvre, Paris); see Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century Based on the Work of John Smith*, ed. and trans. Edward G. Hawke (London, 1911), 5: 482, nos. 132 and 133; Karla Langedijk, "Notities betreffende zelfportretten van Pieter van Slingeland," *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 10 (1962): 88. The discovery of a formerly unknown notarial document makes it possible to reconstruct the entire family of the mason Cornelis Pieters and establish that the "Pieter" baptized as the son of "Cornelis Pieters" on 4 November 1640 was, indeed, the painter. Regionaal Archief Leiden, Notarial Archives, Notary M. van Schade, inv. 1222, deed 94, 27 April 1681 (see also note 3).
2. Three of his seven sisters married bargemen and two married tailors. His brother Jacob became a grocer and his first wife Sara Leopoldus was a daughter of Arent Leopoldus, the founder of a family of successful house painters.
3. As the heirs of their parents, the children were assessed over a capital of 8,000 guilders in the Two-Hundredth Penny Tax in 1674. The core of this estate constituted nine houses, three of which formed a single unit on the Oude Singel. This unit was the parents' residence, and presumably Pieter, who remained a bachelor, lived there until at least 1678, as this was his address when he witnessed the marriage of his younger brother Bartholomeus. In 1681, the houses were divided among the ten children, and Pieter, his then single brother Jacob, and their two underage sisters, were allocated six houses on the Havenstraat near the Zijlpoort, just a stone's throw from his parents' house. Regionaal Archief Leiden, Notarial Archives, Notary M. van Schade, inv. 1222, deed 94, 27 April 1681.
4. "[Zijn kunst] voor geen van syne opkwekelingen, die van eenige geest sijn, verborgen houd, als te sien is in de uytstekende opkomst ende bloeyende voortgank van Frans van Mieris, ende Pieter van Slingeland, in welkers uytmuntendheid te verwagten is dat sy haar Meester gelijk werden, ende waar het mogelijk te boven sullen gaan." Simon van Leeuwen, *Korte besgryving van het Lugdunum Batavorum nu Leyden* (Leiden, 1672), 191–92.
5. "Die in uitvoerigheit en gepolystheit boven die van zyn Meester uitstaken; maar dit is er van dat dezelve door zulk doen wel wat styver zyn. Doch is hy een groot licht in de Konst geweest." Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1718–21; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), 3: 126–27.
6. *Portrait of of Jan Hubrecht* and *Portrait of Anna Ghijs*, 1653 (both Private Collection) and *Self*-Portrait, 1656 (Musée du Louvre, Paris); see Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century Based on the Work of John Smith*, ed. and

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trans. Edward G. Hawke (London, 1911), 5: 482, nos. 132 and 133; Karla Langedijk, "Notities betreffende zelfportretten van Pieter van Slingeland," *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 10 (1962): 88.

7. That Van Slingelandt paid his dues intermittently between 1669 and 1672 and stopped completely as of 1680 does not imply that he lived outside of Leiden from time to time. In these years, membership fees were often collected on an irregular basis. For the quality of the administration of the Guild of Saint Luke, see Piet Bakker, "Crisis? Welke crisis? Kanttekeningen bij de economische neergang van de schilderkunst in Leiden na 1660," *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 27 (2011): 232–70.
8. Eric J. Sluijter, Marlies Enklaar, and Paul Nieuwenhuizen, eds., *Leidse Fijnschilders: Van Gerrit Dou tot Frans van Mieris de Jonge 1630–1760* (Exh. cat. Leiden, Museum de Lakenhal) (Zwolle, 1988), 205.
9. *François Meerman and His Family*, 1668 (Musée du Louvre, Paris). For the identification of this portrait and the lawsuit between the family and the painter, see Rudolf E.O. Ekkart, "Het portret van de familie Meerman door Pieter van Slingelandt," in *De Arte et Libris. Festschrift Erasmus, 1934–1984*, ed. Abraham Horodisch, 69–75 (Amsterdam, 1984).
10. Abraham Bredius, "Een schildersproces in de XVIIe eeuw," *Oud Holland* 57 (1940): 168–71.
11. "Was voor waarheid verhaalt" and "een maand of ses weken heeft zitten schilderen over een bef met kant." Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1718–21; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), 3: 127.
12. "Door de Hr. Meerman seer grotelix wierde verongelyckt" and "dat de cunst die gedaen was aen het conterfeytsen van de outste van de twee kinderen met duysent gulden alleen waerdich was en dat het ongemeen cunstisch was geschildert." Abraham Bredius, "Een schildersproces in de XVIIe eeuw," *Oud Holland* 57 (1940): 169. The witness, Gelein Jorisz van der Kaey, had married Agnieta Cornelisdr van Slingelandt, the painter's sister, in 1671.
13. Regionaal Archief Leiden, Notarial Archives, Notary L. van Overmeer, inv. 978, deed 125, 12 October 1684, with the following entry: "2 conterfeytsels van de overledene en zijn eerste vrouw gedaen door Slingerlant" (two likenesses of the deceased and his first wife done by Slingerlant).
14. See the biography of Gerrit Dou in this catalogue.
15. Regionaal Archief Leiden, Notarial Archives, Notary L. van Overmeer, inv. 978, deed 125, 12 October 1684, "2 ebbenhoute kasjens van Slingerlant" (two ebony cases by Slingerlant); Abraham Bredius, "Een schildersproces in de XVIIe eeuw," *Oud Holland* 57 (1940): 171. This will have been a reference to two paintings in cases with painted doors similar to works by his master Gerrit Dou.
16. Among the known portraits is the *Portrait of Johan van Musschenbroek and His Wife Maria van der Straaten*, 1685/88 (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), presumably painted in 1685, the year of their marriage. Two separate pendant portraits of the couple have been preserved; they are replicas of the portrait in Boston (both in a private collection). Van Slingelandt also portrayed Johan's brother Samuel in 1674 (private collection). Additionally, the painter drew two miniature pendant portraits of this Samuel and his sister Sara (1647–1710) (whereabouts unknown). Listed in the 1872 estate inventory of Jan Tiberius Bodel Nijenhuis are two portraits "door Slingeland" ("by Slingeland") representing Samuel

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van Musschenbroek and “zijne echtgenoote” (“his wife”). The latter identification is incorrect, however, for Samuel never married. See Theodoor Hermann Lunsingh Scheurleer, Cornelia Willemijn Fock, and A.J. van Dissel, eds., *Het Rapenburg. Geschiedenis van een Leidse gracht* (Leiden, 1992), 6: 704. On the Van Musschenbroek family, see C.A. Crommelin, “Leidsche leden van het Geslacht Van Musschenbroek,” *Leids Jaarboekje* 31 (1939): 134–49.

17. *Portrait of Johan Hulshout (1623–1687)*, ca. 1670 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York); and *Portrait of Anna Splinter (1630–1694)*, ca. 1670 (National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin).
18. “Won [hy] door zyne tydslytende wyze van schilderen meer roem als gelt aan.” Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1718–21; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), 3: 127.
19. For the date of death, Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1718–21; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), 3: 127: “Pieter Cornelis van Slingelandt, [wonend] op de Mare,” (“Pieter Cornelis van Slingelandt, [residing] at the Mare”) was buried in the Hooglandse Kerk between 10 and 16 November. See also Karla Langedijk, “Notities betreffende zelfportretten van Pieter van Slingeland,” *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 10 (1962): 88. Eric Jan Sluijter, Marlies Enklaar, and Paul Nieuwenhuizen, *Leidse Fijnschilders: Van Gerrit Dou tot Frans van Mieris de Jonge 1630–1760* (Exh. cat. Leiden, Museum de Lakenhal) (Zwolle, 1988), 205, gives the correct reference, but the wrong church (Pieterskerk). Judging from the address, Slingelandt had meanwhile moved in with his brother Jacob. On 17 November, a week after the burial of his brother, Jacob and Sara Leopoldus, the daughter of a house painter, posted their banns.

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