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Portrait of Pieter Ranst Valckenier (1661–1704)

Michiel van Musscher
(Rotterdam 1645 – 1705 Amsterdam)

1687
oil on canvas
56.5 x 50.6 cm
signed and dated in dark paint, lower left corner: “M. v. Musscher. Pinxit. A.° 1687. ”
MM-102.a

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Michiel van Musscher painted with great finesse these elegant three-quarter-length pendant portraits of a young upper-class couple in a garden. Seated on the heraldic right, the man is dressed in a fashionable, exotic, golden-brown silk *Japonse rok*, which falls open at his torso, revealing a red brocaded undergarment.[1] His jabot and cuffs are adorned with fine floral lace, and on his head he wears a dark brown, curly wig. With his right arm he leans on a mossy wall, while the slender fingers of his right hand hold a small book with a black leather and gold binding. His pose, directed slightly to the right, is mirrored by that of his wife, who has turned slightly toward the left. She is wearing an elegant, purple silk gown trimmed with lace identical to that of her husband. Around her left shoulder and draped over her lap is an orange-brown silk scarf, similar in tone to her husband's garment. When seen together, the two paintings provide a continuous view of a country estate in a lush setting before a distant, mountainous landscape.

With his characteristic attention to detail, Van Musscher took great care in rendering the textures of the various fabrics. He attained the shimmering effect of silk in the man's *Japonse rok* and the woman's dress by boldly applying the highlights with broad brushstrokes, often playfully following the direction of the folds. The much more delicate lace, on the other hand, was painted with thin, barely visible strokes. Using a grayish tone as the base for the lace and adding pure white for the highlights, Van Musscher exquisitely depicted the subtle contrasts between light and shadow, a quality seen in the shadow cast by the proper right sleeve of the man's blouse onto its lace edging **(fig 1)**. He created a similar effect in the contrast between the shaded reverse of the lace around the woman's proper right sleeve and the highlighted front of the lace at her neckline **(fig 2)**.

Old handwritten inscriptions on the reverses of the canvases identify the sitters as 26-year-old Pieter Ranst Valckenier (1661–1704) and his 17-year-old wife, Eva Suzanna Pellicorne (1670–1732) (**(fig 3)** and **(fig 4)**). Valckenier and Pellicorne were married in 1686, which suggests that they commissioned these paintings, dated 1687, as marriage portraits. Pieter's father was the influential Gillis Valckenier (1623–80), who had been the director of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and remained active in the municipal government of Amsterdam until his death.[4] Pieter, too, held several important positions in the Amsterdam municipal government until he eventually became director of the VOC in 1693.[5] The fact that Pieter is wearing a Japanese gown reflects his family's high position in this trading company as much as his upper-class fashion status. Eva Suzanna Pellicorne

Comparative Figures



Fig 1. Detail of MM-102.a showing the delicate shadow of the sitter's proper right cuff on the lace



Fig 2. Detail of MM-102.b



Fig 3. Reverse of MM-102.a revealing the inscription identifying the sitter. The original inscription on the old linen was reproduced in Mylar-encapsulated images and attached to the tops of the reverse, while the contents of the inscription was copied onto the relined canvas.

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was the daughter of the wealthy Casper Pellicorne and Clara Valckenier, Gillis Valckenier's sister, making Pieter and Eva Suzanna first cousins as well as spouses.[6]

It is likely that the outdoor mansion in the idealized, hilly landscape in the background of the pendant portraits is Gynwens in Baambrugge, just south of Amsterdam. Pieter inherited this manor from his father in 1680, and Eva Suzanna continued to live there after her husband's death in 1704. A few years before her death in 1727, she sold this property to Joan van der Voort (1667–1727), the husband of her cousin Anna Jacoba Valckenier (1676–1743).[7] Unfortunately, this mansion no longer survives, and an etching of a country house named Gynwens that appears in Abraham Rademaker's *Holland's Arcadia*, 1730, depicts a different property **(fig 5)**.[8] The Valckenier family, however, owned other mansions in the same vicinity near Amsterdam, and one of them, Valck en Heining, in Loenersloot, still exists **(fig 6)**. The similarity in the appearance of this country house and the structure in the background of the pendant paintings supports the hypothesis that Van Musscher depicted Gynwens in these works. It seems probable that Pieter's second cousin Cornelis (1640–1700), who built Valck en Heining in 1677,[9] based his design on Gynwens.

When Van Musscher painted these portraits in 1687, he was one of the most popular and frequently commissioned portraitists of the Amsterdam elite. Among his many distinguished clients were members of the Van Loon, Blaeu, and Witsen families, and even Czar Peter the Great of Russia, who commissioned a portrait during his visit to the Netherlands in 1697–98.[10] Van Musscher's portraits of Pieter Ranst Valckenier and Eva Suzanna Pellicorne are comparable to other pendant portraits he painted of distinguished couples between 1680 and 1700, such as his 1681 portraits of François le Gillon and Christina Backer **(fig 7)**, or his 1696 portraits of Nicolaes Kalkoen and Agatha van Loon.[11]

In all of these paintings, the elegant couples, just like Pieter and Eva Suzanna, are dressed in lush silks, reveal slender, elongated fingers, and stand in an idealized, pastoral landscape, often with a mansion or landscape extending across the pendants. This courtly style of portraiture was extremely popular among the Dutch upper class in the late seventeenth century and was indebted to the late portraits of the Flemish artist Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641) and the Dutch artists he inspired, such as Jan Mijtens (ca. 1614–70), Caspar Netscher (ca. 1639–84), and Nicolaes Maes (1634–93).[12] Clearly this style, in which Van Musscher excelled, was highly

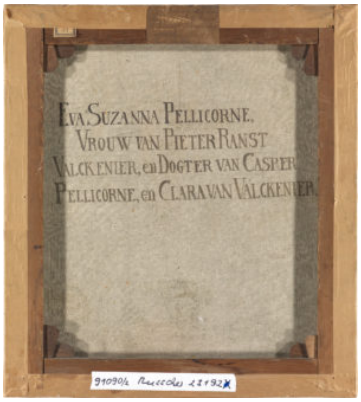


Fig 4. Reverse of MM-102.b revealing the inscription identifying the sitter. The original inscription on the old linen was reproduced in Mylar-encapsulated images and attached to the tops of the reverse, while the contents of the inscription was copied onto the relined canvas.



Fig 5. Abraham Rademaker, "Gynwens apartenant a Mr. Christian Wencel / Gynwens, toebehorende den Heer Christiaan Wencel," etching, 168 x 192 mm, in Abraham Rademaker, *Holland's Arcadia* (Amsterdam, 1730), University of Leiden, Special Collections



Fig 6. Valck en Heining mansion, Loenersloot (outside Amsterdam), built in 1677 by Cornelis Valckenier (1640–1700), second cousin of Pieter Ranst Valckenier

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sought after in the elite circles of Amsterdam.

- Ilona van Tuinen, 2017



Fig 7. Michiel van Musscher, *Portrait of François le Gillon* (left) and *Portrait of Christina Backer* (right), 1681, oil on canvas, 56 x 50 cm, Amsterdam Museum, Amsterdam, SB 2547 and SB 2548, photo Amsterdam Museum, René Gerritsen

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Endnotes

1. For the *Japonse rok*, see Marieke de Winkel, “Rollenspel,” in *Kopstukken: Amsterdammers geportretteerd 1600–1800*, ed. Norbert Middelkoop (Exh. cat. Amsterdam, Amsterdam Museum) (Bussum, 2002), 96–97. This exotic and relatively costly kimono was often worn as an informal housecoat. Because of its elegant appeal and the different possibilities of wearing it, many men in the late seventeenth century chose to wear this garment in portraits.
2. See Technical Summaries for MM-102.a and MM-102.b. In 2006 Timothy Watson discovered the inscriptions on the reverses of the original canvas supports. He created Mylar-encapsulated images of these inscriptions, which he attached to the top center of the reverse of the frame. Nancy Krieg copied the contents of the inscriptions onto the new, relined canvas. It is not possible to date the handwritten inscriptions.
3. Pieter Ranst Valckenier and Eva Suzanna Pellicorne married on 18 April 1686; Johan E. Elias, *De Vroedschap van Amsterdam 1578–1795*, 2 vols. (Haarlem, 1903–5; reprinted in Amsterdam, 1963), 1:478–79. Robert E. Gerhardt, “The Art of Michiel van Musscher,” in *Michiel van Musscher (1645–1705): The Wealth of the Golden Age* (Exh. cat. Amsterdam, Museum van Loon) (Zwolle, 2012), 48, was the first to make the plausible suggestion that these are wedding portraits.
4. Johan E. Elias, *De Vroedschap van Amsterdam 1578–1795*, 2 vols. (Haarlem, 1903–5; reprint, Amsterdam, 1963), 1: 478. Gillis Valckenier was made director of the VOC in 1657. He held the position of burgomaster in the Amsterdam municipal government from 1665 until 1679, the year before his death.
5. Johan E. Elias, *De Vroedschap van Amsterdam 1578–1795*, 2 vols. (Haarlem, 1903–5; reprinted in Amsterdam, 1963), 1:479. See also Jan Wagenaar, *Amsterdam in Zyne Opkomst* (Amsterdam, 1768), 7: 226, where it lists Pieter Ranst Valckenier as “Schepen” of the municipal government in 1695 and as secretary in 1679.
6. Johan E. Elias, *De Vroedschap van Amsterdam 1578–1795*, 2 vols. (Haarlem, 1903–5; reprinted in Amsterdam, 1963), 1:478–79.
7. “Het buiten Gijnwens te Baambrugge,” Edward Munnig Schmidt, *Jaarboekje van het Oudheidkundig Genootschap Nifterlake* (2012): 86. Thanks to Mr. Munnig Schmidt for sending me his article, e-mail communication, November 2013. In preparation of his forthcoming monograph on Michiel van Musscher, Robert E. Gerhardt was told by a member of the Valckenier family that the house in the paintings must be Gynwens. Thanks to Mr. Gerhardt for sharing this information, e-mail communication, November 2013.
8. The relatively small house in the print does not resemble the mansion in the background of the portraits, for it has only four columns of windows instead of five, and a large dormer in the

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roof instead of five small ones, among other things. This was also noted by Edward Munnig Schmidt, “Het buiten Gijnwens te Baambrugge,” *Jaarboekje van het Oudheidkundig Genootschap Nifterlake* (2012): 86. More problematic is that the caption of the etching mentions a Mr. Christian Wencel as the owner of the house. Considering that the etching was published in 1730, only three years after Eva Suzanna had sold the house to Joan van der Voort, it appears that the etching cannot depict the same Gynwens as the one owned by the Valckenier family.

9. Edward Munnig Schmidt, “Het buiten Gijnwens te Baambrugge,” *Jaarboekje van het Oudheidkundig Genootschap Nifterlake* (2012): 86–89. Valck en Heining (accessed 25 October 2013); Cornelis Valckenier purchased the land on 2 June 1677.
10. Robert E. Gerhardt, “Michiel van Musscher: The Best Amsterdam Painter of Small Portraits,” in *Michiel van Musscher (1645–1705): The Wealth of the Golden Age* (Exh. cat. Amsterdam, Museum van Loon) (Zwolle, 2012), 17–18. The heyday of Musscher’s popularity was 1680 to 1700. See the *Allegorical Portrait of Tsar Peter the Great*, oil on canvas, 49 x 41 cm, signed and dated 1698, Stichting Historische Verzamelingen van het huis Oranje-Nasau, The Hague, on loan to the Hermitage in Amsterdam.
11. *Portraits of Nicolaas Kalkoen and Agatha van Loon*, signed and dated 1696, oil on canvas, 56 x 50 cm, Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, Rijswijk.
12. On the influence of Anthony van Dyck’s portraiture on Dutch painting, see Emilie S. Gordenker, *Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641) and the Representation of Dress in Seventeenth-Century Portraiture* (Turnhout, 2001), 74–75. For a discussion of the development of Netscher’s courtly style, see Marjorie E. Wieseman, *Caspar Netscher and Late Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting* (Doornspijk, 2002), 90–101. For an example of Netscher’s elegant, courtly portrait style in The Leiden Collection, see Caspar Netscher’s *Portrait of Susanna Doublet Huygens*, executed in 1669 (CN-102).

Provenance

- Frédéric de Rosenberg, Vienna (his sale, Miethke, Vienna, 9 April 1883, nos. 339, 340).
- (Sale, Galerie Fischer, Lucerne, 9–14 November 2005, no. 1023 (with pendant); [Salomon Lilian, B. V., Amsterdam]).
- From whom acquired by the present owner in 2005.

Exhibition History

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- Amsterdam, Museum van Loon, “Michiel van Musscher (1645–1705): The Wealth of the Golden Age,” 9 March–10 June 2012 [lent by the present owner].

References

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- Gerhardt, Robert E. “The Art of Michiel van Musscher.” In *Michiel van Musscher (1645–1705): The Wealth of the Golden Age*. Edited by Robert E. Gerhardt, Tonko Grever, and Francis Griep-Quint, 48–51. Exh. cat. Amsterdam, Museum van Loon. Zwolle, 2012.
- Munnig Schmidt, Edward. “Het buiten Gijnwens te Baambrugge.” *Jaarboekje van het Oudheidkundig Genootschap Nifterlake* (2012): 86–89.

Technical Summary

The support, a single piece of fine, plain-weave fabric with all four tacking margins present, has been lined with a gauze interleaf. There is cusping but no paper tape along all four sides. An inscription identifying the male sitter was discovered along the support reverse during the lining procedure and has been transcribed onto the lining reverse. There are two paper labels but no wax seals, import stamps or stencils along the lining or stretcher.

A dark-colored, thinly and evenly applied ground extends onto the tacking margins. The oil paint has been applied smoothly with no use of impasto but with extremely fine detail in the lacework, brocade and book spine.

Although the flesh tones of the hands are slightly warmer than those in the female companion portrait, the position of the fingers of both the left and right hands are remarkably similar in each portrait. The fingers of both hands in the female portrait have been shifted slightly during the paint stage, perhaps in an attempt to more closely match the male companion piece.[1]

Two sets of overlapping irises visible in the X-radiograph indicate that the positions of the sitter’s eyes and eyebrows were shifted during the paint stage.[2] In the final composition, the lower portions of both irises appear almost perfectly round and only the uppermost curve of the irises are obscured by the upper lids. This slight adjustment may have been made so the portrait more closely relates to the female companion piece.

No underdrawing or compositional changes are readily apparent in infrared images captured at

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780–1000 nanometers.

The painting is signed and dated in dark paint along the lower left corner.

The painting was cleaned, lined, and restored in 2006 and remains in a good state of preservation.

Technical Summary Endnotes

1. See X-radiograph image of MM-102.b in The Leiden Collection archive files.
2. See X-radiograph image of MM-102.a in The Leiden Collection archive files.

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