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**Portrait of Susanna Doublet Huygens**

Caspar Netscher  
(Prague or Heidelberg ca. 1639 – 1684 The  
Hague)

1669

oil on panel

45.4 x 34.7 cm

signed and dated in light paint, lower right  
corner: “C. Netscher. Ao 1669.”

CN-102

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Susanna Doublet Huygens (1637–1725) was the youngest of five children (and the only daughter) born to Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687)—renowned poet, connoisseur, and tireless secretary to three Dutch *stadholders*—and his wife, Suzanna van Baerle (1599–1637). On 20 April 1660 Susanna Huygens married her cousin Philips Doublet III (1633–1707), Heer van Sint Annaland and Mogershill and treasurer general of the United Provinces. Doublet, the son of Constantijn’s sister Geertruyd and Philips Doublet II, is credited with introducing French-style gardens (based on the designs of the French landscape architect André Le Nôtre) to the Netherlands at his estate Clingendael, near The Hague.<sup>[1]</sup> From 1687 Doublet was charged with remodeling the stadholder Willem III’s gardens at Huis ten Bosch also according to French principles. Susanna and Philips Doublet had six children, of whom three lived to adulthood.

From 1667 to 1672, Caspar Netscher painted six portraits of various members of the Huygens family—prestigious commissions from one of the Netherlands’s most respected dynasties.<sup>[2]</sup> The first, a portrait of Philips Doublet, is dated 1667 (**fig 1**), but may well have been started slightly earlier. A letter from Christiaan Huygens to Doublet, dated 5 November 1666, implies that Huygens had already asked his sister for copies of their portraits by Netscher. A subsequent letter from Huygens to Doublet, dated 26 November 1666, suggests that Doublet had seen to the promised portraits: in it, Huygens cautioned Doublet to pack them well and to make sure they were dry before rolling them and sending them on to Paris. Nearly a year later, in October 1667, Huygens had yet to receive the paintings. He chided Doublet for still leaving them with the painter, commenting “if you expect both of you to become more beautiful than you are before [the painter puts] the last touches to the faces, we will have to wait some time yet.”<sup>[3]</sup>

We do not know when (or if) Huygens ever received the portraits of his sister and brother-in-law: Christiaan’s letter to Susanna Doublet of 20 January 1668 complains “your painting has not yet arrived,” but it is not certain that this refers to either or both paintings by Netscher.<sup>[4]</sup> As the dates on the pendant portraits of Philips and Susanna differ (1667 for the former and 1669 for the latter), it may be that the portrait of Philips was completed first and dispatched to Paris, and the one of Susanna followed later. Huygens’s letters would also seem to suggest that there was more than one autograph version of each portrait—the primary version and the ones sent to Paris—although only one example of each likeness can be traced. Susanna Louisa Huygens (1714–85), the first documented owner of the painting, was the granddaughter (on her maternal side) of Susanna and Philips Doublet and (on her paternal side) of Susanna’s brother Lodewijk Huygens. As the last direct descendant of Constantijn Huygens, she was the heir to several family collections, and it is not

### Comparative Figures



**Fig 1.** Caspar Netscher, *Portrait of Philips Doublet III*, 1667, oil on panel, 45.4 x 35.5 cm, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig, inv. 794



**Fig 2.** Caspar Netscher, *Portrait of Lady Philippina Staunton*, 1668, oil on canvas, 86.5 x 68.5 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. SK-C-1611



**Fig 3.** Caspar Netscher, *Portrait of a Woman, called the Duchess of Cleveland*, 1669, oil on panel, 28.5 x



recorded from whom she may have inherited Netscher's portrait of her grandmother and namesake.<sup>[5]</sup>

21.5 cm, private collection

Netscher's portraits of Susanna and Philips Doublet exemplify the fashionable and highly decorative likenesses that he began to produce in the second half of the 1660s: small, seductive images, projecting an aura of affluence and savoir faire that suited the increasingly cosmopolitan aspirations of a wealthy Dutch patriciate.<sup>[6]</sup> Netscher depicted Susanna in three-quarter length before a lush red velvet curtain and a distant garden view; she is turned slightly to the left, acknowledging the pendant likeness of her husband (**fig 1**). Susanna wears a white satin gown over a tightly ruched chemise, the sleeves of which are rolled back and pinned up at the elbows with a single pearl. The sleeves of her gown are slashed to reveal a salmon-pink lining, the only touch of color in her otherwise pristine attire. The folds of her skirt are swept back lightly to give the figure an impression of forward movement. Susanna holds a sprig of orange blossoms in her left hand; the flowers were a traditional symbol of purity and thus a suitable attribute for brides and married women.<sup>[7]</sup> When the portrait was cleaned in 2006, overpaint around the sitter's head was removed to reveal an extravagant coiffure representing the epitome of French-inspired fashion in the years prior to 1670.<sup>[8]</sup> Popularized in France by the Marquise de Sévigné, the style (known as "à la hurluberlu") featured massive clusters of dangling curls to either side of the head.

In composition and execution the *Portrait of Susanna Doublet Huygens* can be compared with a number of other female portraits painted by Netscher during the same period in both three-quarter and full length, such as the *Portrait of Lady Philippina Staunton*, dated 1668 (**fig 2**), or the *Portrait of a Woman, called the Duchess of Cleveland*, dated 1669 (**fig 3**). Particularly successful in the present portrait is the way in which Netscher used the flashes of salmon-colored lining at the sleeves to link the figure with the ruby velvet curtain and the ruddy tones of the background landscape.

- Marjorie E. Wieseman, 2017

## Endnotes

1. Vanessa Bezemer-Sellers, "Clingendael: An Early Example of a Le Nôtre-style Garden in Holland," *Journal of Garden History* 7, no. 1 (1987): 1–42.
2. In addition to the present painting, these are: *Portrait of Philips Doublet III*, 1667, oil on panel, 45.4 x 35.5 cm, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig, inv. 794; *Portrait of Geertruyd Huygens*, 1668, oil on panel, 46.5 x 39.5 cm, Huygensmuseum Hofwijk, Voorburg; *Portrait of a Young Man, possibly of the Huygens Family*, 1669, oil on panel, 47.5 x 39.5 cm, present whereabouts unknown; *Portrait of Christiaan Huygens*, 1671, oil on paper mounted on panel, 30 x 24 cm, Haags Historisch Museum, The Hague, inv. 73.26; and *Portrait of Constantijn Huygens*, 1672, oil on panel, 27 x 23 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. A 292. See Marjorie E. Wieseman, *Caspar Netscher and Late Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting* (Doornspijk, 2002), 215–16, 221, 231, 244–45, and 247–48, nos. 66, 73, 89, 107, and 112 respectively.
3. See Marjorie E. Wieseman, *Caspar Netscher and Late Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting* (Doornspijk, 2002), 127–28, docs. 22, 23, 25, 26; and Christiaan Huygens, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 6, *Correspondance 1666–1669*, ed. Johannes Bosscha Jr. (The Hague, 1895), nos. 1562 (Christiaan Huygens to Philips Doublet, 5 November 1666); 1565 (Christiaan Huygens to Philips Doublet, 26 November 1666); 1592 (Christiaan Huygens to Lodewijk Huygens, 15 July 1667); and 1607 (Christiaan Huygens to Philips Doublet, 23 October 1667); accessed online, 17 May 2013.
4. Christiaan Huygens, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 6, *Correspondance 1666–1669*, ed. Johannes Bosscha Jr. (The Hague, 1895), no. 1620 (Christiaan Huygens to Susanna Huygens, 20 January 1668); accessed online, 17 May 2013.
5. On the history and dispersal of the Huygens family collections, see Ernst Wilhelm Moes, "Een verzameling familieportretten der Huygensen in 1785," *Oud Holland* 14 (1896): 176–84; and A. M. Th. Leerintveld, "Ter goeder memorie van mynen naem: De nalatenschap van Constantijn Huygens," in *Soeticheydt des Buyten-levens: leven en leren op Hofwijck*, ed. Victor Freijser (Delft, 1988), 97–115.
6. On Netscher's crafting of his distinctive portrait style, see Marjorie E. Wieseman, *Caspar Netscher and Late Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting* (Doornspijk, 2002), 92–101.
7. Eddy de Jongh, *Portretten van echt en trouw: Huwelijk en gezin in de Nederlandse kunst van de zeventiende eeuw* (Exh. cat. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum) (Zwolle, 1986), 189.
8. The overpainted hairstyle is illustrated in (among others) Marjorie E. Wieseman, *Caspar Netscher and Late Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting* (Doornspijk, 2002), pl. 88.
9. Marjorie E. Wieseman, *Caspar Netscher and Late Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting* (Doornspijk, 2002), 223–24, 230, nos. 77 and 87 respectively.

## Provenance

- Possibly Christiaan Huygens (1629–95), Paris; by descent to Susanna Louisa Huygens, Baroness van Wassenaer van Rijven (1714–85); by descent to her nephew, Johan Phillips Hoeufft (1769–1821) (sale, Joannes Huygens, The Hague, 4 October 1825, no. 51 [for 26 florins to Camberlyn together with its pendant, no. 50, *Portrait of Philips Doublet III*]).
- Joseph Guillaume Jean Camberlyn (1783–1861), Amougies, Pepinghem, Belgium, by 1825; by descent to Hyacinthe Camberlyn (1829–90), Amougies; by descent to Joseph Camberlyn, Amougies (his sale, Frederik Muller, Amsterdam, 13 July 1926, no. 629 [for 5,200 florins to “Van Groningen op Hoevelaken,” together with its pendant, no. 628, *Portrait of Philips Doublet III*]).
- Dr. C. J. K. van Aalst (1866–1939), Hoevelaken, The Netherlands, possibly by 1926; by descent until ca. 1957.
- [Cramer Oude Kunst Gallery, The Hague, 1965–66].
- Private collection, Germany, by 1966 (sale, Sotheby’s, London, 22 April 2004, no. 42 [Salomon Lilian, B. V., 2004]).
- From whom acquired by the present owner in 2004.

## Exhibition History

- Brussels, Société de Saint Vincent de Paul, “L’Exposition de Tableaux,” 1855, no. 89 [lent by Joseph Guillaume Jean Camberlyn].
- Brussels, Académie Royale de Belgique, “Exposition de tableaux de maîtres anciens,” 1886 [lent by Joseph Guillaume Jean Camberlyn].
- Utrecht, Centraal Museum, “Lustrumtentoonstelling uit het kunstbezit der reünisten van het Utrechts Studenten Corps,” 22 June–11 July 1956, no. 22 [lent by the heirs of Dr. C. J. K. van Aalst].
- The Hague, Galerie Hans Cramer, 1965–66, no. 20.
- Norfolk, The Chrysler Museum of Art, on loan with the permanent collection, 2005 (lent by the present owner).
- Beijing, National Museum of China, “Rembrandt and His Time: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 17 June–3 September 2017 [lent by the present owner].
- Shanghai, Long Museum, West Bund, “Rembrandt, Vermeer and Hals in the Dutch Golden Age: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 23 September 2017–25 February 2018 [lent by the present owner].
- Moscow, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, “The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer: Masterpieces



of The Leiden Collection,” 28 March 2018–22 July 2018 [lent by the present owner].

- St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum, “The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer: Masterpieces of The Leiden Collection,” 5 September 2018–13 January 2019 [lent by the present owner].
- Abu Dhabi, Louvre Abu Dhabi, “Rembrandt, Vermeer and the Dutch Golden Age. Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection and the Musée du Louvre,” 14 February–18 May 2019 [lent by the present owner].
- Amsterdam, H’ART Museum, “From Rembrandt to Vermeer: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 9 April–24 August 2025 [lent by the present owner].
- West Palm Beach, Norton Museum of Art, “Art and Life in Rembrandt’s Time: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 25 October 2025–29 March 2026 [lent by the present owner].

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## Versions

### Versions and Copies

Pendant

1. Caspar Netscher, *Portrait of Philips Doublet III*, 1667, oil on panel, 45.4 x 35.5 cm, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig, inv. no. 794.

## Technical Summary

The support, a single plank of knotty, vertical wavy-grained, rectangular-shaped non-Baltic oak, has bevels on all four sides,<sup>[1]</sup> is thinned and uncradled, and has machine tool marks and one red wax collection seal but no import stamps or panel maker’s marks.

A light-colored ground has been thinly and evenly applied followed by a light gray layer. The paint has been thinly and smoothly applied through the flesh tones and background and with low, visible brushwork through



the drapery folds, satin dress, and foliage.

No underdrawing is readily apparent in infrared images captured at 780–1000 nanometers. No compositional changes are noted, although the X-radiograph suggests the vegetation may have originally extended lower along the lower right.

The painting is signed and dated in light paint along the lower right corner.

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

### **Technical Summary Endnotes**

1. The characterization of the wood is based on visual examination of the X-radiograph by Ian Tyers.