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Doctor's Visit

Jacob Toorenvliet
(Leiden 1640 – 1719 Leiden)

ca. 1666–67
oil on copper
52.3 x 41.3 cm
signed in light paint, lower left corner, beneath doctor's chair: "Jtoorenvliet Jnv[…] Fecit"
JT-102

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This splendid picture is one of the finest of a series of "doctor's visit" scenes that Jacob Toorenvliet painted in the 1660s.[1] The setting is a room embellished with a beautifully coffered ceiling, a canopy bed with a fringed curtain, a table covered with a luxurious tapestry, and a chair upholstered with red fabric. The patient, a weak, elegantly dressed woman lying in bed, exchanges meaningful gazes with the maid, who tenderly cares for her. A gray-bearded doctor takes the woman's pulse while examining a flask containing her urine. He presumably brought the flask in the cylinder-shaped basket held by the handsomely dressed boy beside him. As is typical of the artist's early paintings, Toorenvliet has situated these brightly-lit figures against a dark background and enlivened his scene with bright reds and whites.[2] Also representative of his early paintings is the smooth, enamel-like finish and delicate rendering of the minute details that animate his scene. For these thematic and stylistic reasons it seems probable that Toorenvliet painted this scene in the mid- to late 1660s, probably around 1666 or 1667, as two of his other doctor's visit scenes are dated 1666.[3]

The doctor's visit was a particularly popular subject among Leiden painters in the 1650s and 1660s, among them Gerrit Dou (1613–75), Frans van Mieris the Elder (1635–81), and Jan Steen (1626–79). Toorenvliet, who was born in Leiden, would have known their works.[4] In paintings by each of these masters the female patient, looking pale and weak, is shown suffering from a malady for which there is no cure: lovesickness. The doctor typically takes her pulse (a woman's accelerating pulse rate could betray her secret feeling of love) or tests her urine, the color, texture, and smell of which could reveal the patient's mental condition, including a state of melancholy caused by lovesickness.[5] In fact, early examples of the doctor's visit in emblemata and book illustrations explicitly reveal the cause of the patient's illness. In a small print from *'s Werelts begin, midden, eynde besloten in den trou-ringh, met den proef-steen van den selven* by Jacob Cats, a "sick" woman named Rhodopis lies in her bed with an arrow through her heart. The arrow belongs to the cupid who stands beside her bed. Death, also carrying a bow, stands in the background, an indication that the woman's condition is fatal **(fig 1)**.[6]

Painters of this theme adopted a more suggestive and subtle manner than the aforementioned illustrators to narrate the story of lovesickness. A good example is Steen's *The Physician's Visit*, ca. 1658–62 **(fig 2)**.[7] In Steen's picture, the doctor glances knowingly to the maid holding a bottle of urine, an indication that he has come to a diagnosis that lovesickness is the cause of her illness. In case there should be any doubt on the part of the viewer, Steen included other motifs to reinforce the point: a modern-day Cupid in the guise of a boy holding a bow and arrow and a painting on the wall in the background representing Venus and Adonis, an allusion to

Comparative Figures



Fig 1. Jacob Cats, A Doctor Tending to Rhodopis in bed, from *'s Werelts begin, midden, eynde besloten in den trou-ringh, met den proef-steen van den selven,* Dordrecht, 1637



Fig 2. Jan Steen, *The Physician's Visit*, ca. 1658–62, oil on panel, 49 x 42 cm, The Wellington Collection, Apsley House, inv. no. WM.1525-1948, © Historic England Archive.



Fig 3. Gerrit Dou, *Doctor's Visit*, 1653, oil on panel, 49.3 x 36.6 cm, Kusthistorisches Museum, Vienna

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the tragic end of that love. Although Toorenvliet did not include such supporting motifs, the meaningful glances exchanged by the mistress and the maid suggest that they are already fully aware of the cause of her illness.

The popularity of the doctor's visit theme in Leiden was partially due to the academic environment stimulated by its prominent university. Scholarly interest in medical science was reflected in the large number of dissertations and publications in this field, and scholars and doctors appreciated paintings with pseudo-medical subjects.[8] Dou, who was Toorenvliet's uncle by marriage, created the prototype of the doctor inspecting urine in his *Doctor's Visit*, 1653 (**fig 3**).[9] In his painting the doctor holds up a flask in order to get a better look at the fluid, while the elderly maidservant, who brought the sample of her mistress's urine, awaits his diagnosis. The physician's pose, in reverse, is remarkably similar to that of Toorenvliet's doctor, which suggests that Toorenvliet was aware of Dou's prototype. At the same time, he must have known and responded to Van Mieris's *Doctor's Visit*, 1657 (**fig 4**).[10] Toorenvliet clearly based his composition and individual motifs on this picture, among them the diagonally placed canopy bed and the carpet covered table. Notably, Van Mieris depicted the doctor taking the patient's pulse rather than examining her urine, as Dou had done. As though doubting whether either one of these examination techniques was foolproof, Toorenvliet represents his doctor simultaneously examining the woman's urine and taking her pulse, thereby joining together the narrative approaches of his predecessors.[11]



Fig 4. Frans van Mieris the Elder, *Doctor's Visit*, 1657, oil on panel, 34 x 27 cm, Kusthistorisches Museum, Vienna

It has long been supposed that Toorenvliet executed *Doctor's Visit* in Leiden prior to leaving for Rome around 1670. Piet Bakker, however, has postulated that the painter departed for Rome shortly after completing his training in the early 1660s, and that he subsequently moved from Rome to Vienna in the late 1660s (see biography). As a result of his research it now seems probable that Toorenvliet executed this work while he was living abroad. Given Toorenvliet's international ambitions, it is understandable that he would have chosen to depict this characteristic Leiden subject after he had left his home country. By associating himself with great predecessors, he presented himself as a painter in the esteemed Leiden tradition of Dou and Van Mieris, whose artistic reputations in the courts of Europe were unparalleled.[12] Their fame must have had an immeasurable impact on Toorenvliet and other Leiden painters of the next generation. Where Toorenvliet worked on his *Doctor's Visit* remains uncertain, yet this exquisite example of his early work bears witness to the artist's ambition to create a market niche abroad as a successor to the illustrious painters of Leiden.

- Junko Aono, 2017

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Endnotes

1. Susanne H. Karau, "Leben und Werk des Leidener Malers Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719)" (PhD diss. Universität Berlin, 2002), nos. A13, 14, and 15.
2. Susanne H. Karau, "Leben und Werk des Leidener Malers Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719)" (PhD diss. Universität Berlin, 2002), 156–57.
3. Susanne H. Karau, "Leben und Werk des Leidener Malers Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719)" (PhD diss. Universität Berlin, 2002), nos. A14 and 15.
4. For a detailed study of this theme, see Einer Petterson, "'Amans Amanti Medicus': Die Iconologie des Motivs 'Der artzliche Besuch,'" in *Hollandische Genremalerei im 17. Jahrhundert,* ed. Henning Bock and Thomas W. Gaehtgens, special issue no. 4, Jahrbuch Preussischer Kulturbesitz 4 (1987): 195–224.
5. Einer Petterson, "'Amans Amanti Medicus': Die Iconologie des Motivs 'Der artzliche Besuch,'" in *Hollandische Genremalerei im 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Henning Bock and Thomas W. Gaehtgens, Jahrbuch Preussischer Kulturbesitz, special issue no. 4 (Berlin, 1987), 204–5; Laurinda S. Dixon, *Perilous Chastity: Women and Illness in Pre-Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Ithaca and London, 1995), 109; H. Perry Chapman, Wouter Th. Kloek, and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Jan Steen, Painter and Storyteller*, ed. Guido Jansen (Exh. cat. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (New Haven, 1996), 150–51, 153, n. 13.
6. The physician, who takes the woman's pulse and simultaneously examines her urine in a flask, is a prototype of the multitasking doctor that Toorenvliet later depicted in his work. Jacob Cats, *'s Werelts begin, midden, eynde besloten in den trou-ringh met den proef-steen van den selven* (Dordrecht, 1637), 704. See also Einer Petterson, "'Amans Amanti Medicus': Die Iconologie des Motivs 'Der artzliche Besuch,'" in *Hollandische Genremalerei im 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Henning Bock and Thomas W. Gaehtgens, Jahrbuch Preussischer Kulturbesitz, special issue no. 4 (Berlin, 1987), 211. Otto van Veen's *Emblemata Amorum* (1614) also includes an emblem showing a cupid taking the patient's pulse and holding a flask. See Einer Petterson, "'Amans Amanti Medicus': Die Iconologie des Motivs 'Der artzliche Besuch,'" in *Hollandische Genremalerei im 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Henning Bock and Thomas W. Gaehtgens, Jahrbuch Preussischer Kulturbesitz, special issue no. 4 (1987): 209.
7. Jan Steen, who made no fewer than 19 paintings on the subject, always indicated that the patient was suffering from lovesickness by including motifs that alluded to the woman's love affair. With the exception of the painting in Haywards Heath, England (the Collection, Colonel Sir Ralph Clarke, Haywards Heath, England), in which the doctor both takes the patient's pulse and examines her urine, Steen usually represented a doctor simply taking a woman's pulse (*The Physician's Visit*, Wellington Museum, Apsley House, London; and *The Lovesick Woman*, Alte Pinakothek, Munich). See H. Perry Chapman, Wouter Th. Kloek, and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Jan Steen: Painter and Storyteller*, ed. Guido Jansen (Exh. cat. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (New Haven,

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1996), 150–53, no. 16; and Mariët Westermann, *The Amusements of Jan Steen: Comic Painting in the Seventeenth Century* (Zwolle, 1997), 99–106.

8. The production of theatrical plays that narrated the story of lovesickness could also have contributed to the popularity of this theme in the art of painting. Einer Petterson, "'Amans Amanti Medicus': Die Iconologie des Motivs 'Der artzliche Besuch,'" in *Hollandische Genremalerei im 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Henning Bock and Thomas W. Gaehtgens, Jahrbuch Preussischer Kulturbesitz, special issue no. 4 (1987): 212–14; and Mariët Westermann, *The Amusements of Jan Steen: Comic Painting in the Seventeenth Century* (Zwolle, 1997), 99–105.

9. Ronni Baer, "The Paintings of Gerrit Dou (1613–1675)," 3 vols. (PhD diss. New York University, 1990), cat. no. 62; and Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, Wolfgang Prohaska, Karl Schütz, and Martina Haja, *Die Gemäldegalerie des Kunsthistorischen Museums in Wien: Verzeichnis der Gemälde* (Vienna, 1991), 50.

10. Otto Naumann, *Frans van Mieris (1635–1681) the Elder* (Doornspijk, 1981), 2: 22–24, no. 20; Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, Wolfgang Prohaska, Karl Schütz, and Martina Haja, *Die Gemäldegalerie des Kunsthistorischen Museums in Wien: Verzeichnis der Gemälde* (Vienna, 1991), 84; and Quentin Buvelot, ed., *Frans van Mieris 1635–1681* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis; Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art) (Zwolle, 2005), 107–10, no. 13.

11. Toorenvliet first depicted this type of doctor in a picture dated 1663, which is probably the first instance when an artist depicted a doctor undertaking these dual examinations. See Susanne H. Karau, *Leben und Werk des Leidener Malers Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719)* (Ph.D. diss., Universität Berlin, 2002), cat. nos. A13 and D19. Caspar Netscher and Jan Steen also depicted the same multitasking doctor, but their pictures were made slightly later than Toorenvliet's: Marjorie E. Wieseman, *Caspar Netscher and Late Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting* (Doornspijk, 2002), 181–82, no. 24. For Jan Steen, see note 7.

12. It is possible that the two pictures of doctors by Dou and Van Mieris mentioned above (figs. 3 and 4), now in the collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, were part of the imperial collection in the Viennese court during the 1660s. They were, however, not mentioned in the Archduke's inventory of 1659–60, and it is unknown how they would have been purchased and incorporated into the collection. Ronni Baer, "The Paintings of Gerrit Dou (1613–1675)," 3 vols. (PhD diss. New York University, 1990), 102; eadem, *Gerrit Dou 1613–1675*, ed. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. (Exh. cat. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art; London, Dulwich Picture Gallery; The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague and Washington D.C., 2000), 31; and Otto Naumann, *Frans van Mieris (1635–1681) the Elder* (Doornspijk, 1981), 1: 24. Furthermore, in the year 1660, pictures by Dou and Van Mieris had entered the collections of different European royals, which established their international reputations: Dou's painting *The Young Mother* (1658, Mauritshuis, The Hague) was sent to Charles II of England as part of the "Dutch gift," and Van Mieris's painting *The Cloth Shop* (1660, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) was acquired by Archduke Leopold in Vienna for an exorbitantly high price, probably at least 1,000 guilders.

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Provenance

- [Galerie Sanct Lucas, Vienna, 1972].
- Private collection, Vienna [Galerie Sanct Lucas, Vienna, 2007].
- From whom purchased by the present owner.

Exhibition History

- Oxford, Ashmolean Museum of Art, on loan with the permanent collection, January 2011–August 2015 [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].
- Albany, Albany Institute of History & Art, "Delights of the Senses: Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art and Life. Featuring Paintings from The Leiden Collection," 14 September–31 December 2024, no. 19 [lent by the present owner].

References

- Galerie Sanct Lucas. *Galerie Sanct Lucas, Wien, Gemälde Alter Meister, Sommer 1972*. Vienna, 1972, no. 24.
- Karau, Susanne Henriette. "Leben und Werk des Leidener Malers Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719)." PhD diss. Universität Berlin, 2002, 31, n. 82, and no. B28.
- Yeager-Crasselt, Lara. "Doctor's Visit." In *Rembrandt and His Time: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection.* Edited by Lara Yeager-Crasselt, 138–9; 186, no. 59. Translated by Li Ying. Exh. cat. Beijing, National Museum of China. Beijing, 2017.
- Long Museum, West Bund. *Rembrandt, Vermeer and Hals in the Dutch Golden Age: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection*. Exh. cat. Shanghai, Long Museum, West Bund. Shanghai, 2017, 138–39.

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- Yeager-Crasselt, Lara. "Doctor's Visit." In *The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer: Masterpieces of The Leiden Collection*. Edited by Polina Lyubimova, 216–17; 247, no. 75. Translated by Daria Babich and Daria Kuzina. Exh. cat. Moscow, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts; St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum. Moscow, 2018.
- Muzii, Valentina. *Diagnosi d'autore: La medicina nell'arte*. Teramo, 2020, 27–28; 71, fig. 21.

Technical Summary

The support, a rectangular copper sheet with minor distortions along the upper corners and center of the left edge, has been adhered to a similarly sized backing board. Narrow wood shims with mitered corners have been attached with brads to all four sides and the enlarged supplementary support has been cradled.[1] There is one red wax seal, a black stencil, a red ink inscription and remnants of a paper label, but no maker's marks along the cradle.

Small, light-colored, granular inclusions appear to be beneath the paint, presumably part of a ground layer. The inclusions appear to be densest along the green bed curtain. The paint has been smoothly applied and the tops of the light-colored inclusions remain exposed

The painting is indistinctly signed in light paint along the lower left corner beneath the doctor's chair, but is it is undated.

No underdrawing is readily apparent in infrared images captured at 720 nanometers.[2]

Compositional changes visible in the infrared images include slight shifts in position of both the patient's and the maid's proper right hands. The proper left hand of the maid was added after the patient's sleeve was painted, and a pentimento across the lemon on the table allows the silver plate to show through.

The painting has not undergone conservation treatment since its acquisition in 2005 and remains in a good state of preservation.[3]

Technical Summary Endnotes

1. Construction based on visual examination of the X-radiograph and high-resolution front and reverse images.
2. Additional information may be revealed at wavelengths that penetrate further into the infrared region.
3. Entry based in part on examination report by Jevon Thistlewood, paintings conservator, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

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