

Changes of Identity in *Garland of Flowers and Vase* by Gaspar Peeter Verbruggen the Younger

Surprising discoveries were made during the conservation treatment of a floral painting from 1691 by Gaspar Peeter Verbruggen the Younger (fig. 1). After World War II, it entered the state collection, which is now part of the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (Instituut Collectie Nederland, ICN). The painting was recently selected for conservation treatment as part of the *compensatieregeling* project, in which ICN paintings on loan to government ministries were examined to assess their condition, then restored if necessary.¹ *Garland of Flowers and Vase* was selected for conservation because of aesthetic and structural problems, but its treatment presented some unexpected challenges. The painting could not have been given the name *Garland of Flowers and Vase* when Verbruggen painted it, as technical examination revealed that the composition changed during its lifetime.

The signature in the bottom left of *Garland of Flowers and Vase* reads “Gaspar. Pedre. Verbruggen” and incorporates the date “1691” into an F-shaped curlicue (fig. 2).² Gaspar Peeter Verbruggen the Younger was born in Antwerp in 1664. He was taught by his father, Gaspar Peeter Verbruggen the Elder (1635-1681), who was a renowned flower and still-life painter.³ At the age of thirteen, Verbruggen the Younger became a master in the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke, and by the end of the century he had a workshop with at least six pupils.⁴ In 1691, the year he was elected dean of the guild, he completed the painting discussed here. Following a period of financial difficulty, Verbruggen worked in The Hague between 1703 and 1723. He then returned to Antwerp, where he lived until his death in 1730.

The genre of floral still-life painting flourished in Antwerp in the seventeenth century, following the success of artists like Jan Brueghel the Elder (“Velvet Breughel”, 1568-1625) and his pupil Daniel Seghers (1590-1661). Many artists, like Verbruggen, dedicated themselves exclusively to flower painting. Within this genre, he experimented with several types of compositions such as flowers in a vase displayed in a niche, an antique vase on a plinth decorated with fabrics and flowers, or allegorical female figures with festoons of flowers against the backdrop of an Italianate landscape. He also made several paintings of garlands of flowers surrounding a central motif, including the painting discussed here.

Historically, the composition of a wreath around a central motif developed from medieval devotional images of the Madonna of the Rosary, which depict the Virgin Mary encircled by roses.⁵ In the first decade of the seventeenth century, Federico Borromeo (1564-1631), Cardinal and Archbishop of Milan, was instrumental in introducing the composition of the floral wreath to Italy and the Netherlands. When he commissioned prominent Flemish artists to paint garlands around images of the Madonna, he specified the importance of the flowers themselves. This elevated the status of floral garlands from simple adornments to significant subjects in their own



¹
Gaspar Peeter Verbruggen the Younger, *Garland of Flowers and Vase* (*Bloemkrans en een vaas*), 1691, oil on canvas, 140 x 110 cm. Instituut Collectie Nederland, Rijswijk/Amsterdam, NK2140, after treatment. Unless otherwise noted, the photos were taken by the author, and are copyright of the Instituut Collectie Nederland (ICN).



2 ▲
Detail of figure 1: signature, after treatment.



3 ▶
Detail of figure 1: central motif, vase of flowers, after treatment.

right. Over the course of the seventeenth century, paintings depicting wreaths of flowers or fruit became popular with other patrons. They were usually the result of the collaboration between two artists; a specialist flower painter would paint the garland, and the central motif was completed by another artist.⁶ The central motif was often a religious scene in a cartouche, sometimes painted in *grisaille*.⁷ Later examples incorporated mythological scenes, portraits, and even animals. However, the choice to paint a vase of flowers within a floral wreath – as we see in this Verbruggen painting – is unusual.

This incongruous central motif was the starting point for the investigation of *Garland of Flowers and Vase*. Before the conservation and restoration treatment began, the painting was the subject of a thorough technical examination. Even through the disfiguring layers of yellow varnish and surface dirt, it was clear that the vase of flowers in the middle was painted in a different style than the rest of the painting. The flowers in the vase lacked the vigorous brushwork, attention to detail, and distinctive highlights that make the floral garland look three-dimensional and lifelike (fig. 3). Furthermore, the flowers in the vase were exact copies of some of the flowers in the garland (fig. 4). These observations suggested that the central motif was *not* painted by Verbruggen, and was probably a later addition. The paint used in the central motif was opaque and thickly applied; this implied that it might cover an earlier composition. The painting was examined under the microscope, in raking light, and with x-radiography to ascertain what lay underneath.⁸ The result of the x-ray confirmed the expectations, but was still surprising: a portrait of a woman emerged (fig. 5). Although the portrait is superimposed with the flowers and only certain heavy pigments (for instance, lead white) are detected by the x-ray, her facial

4
Detail of figure 1: Comparison
of the original flowers in the
garland (4a, 4c, 4e, 4g) with
overpainted flowers in central
motif (4b, 4d, 4f, 4h).

4a



4b



4c



4d



4e



4f



4g



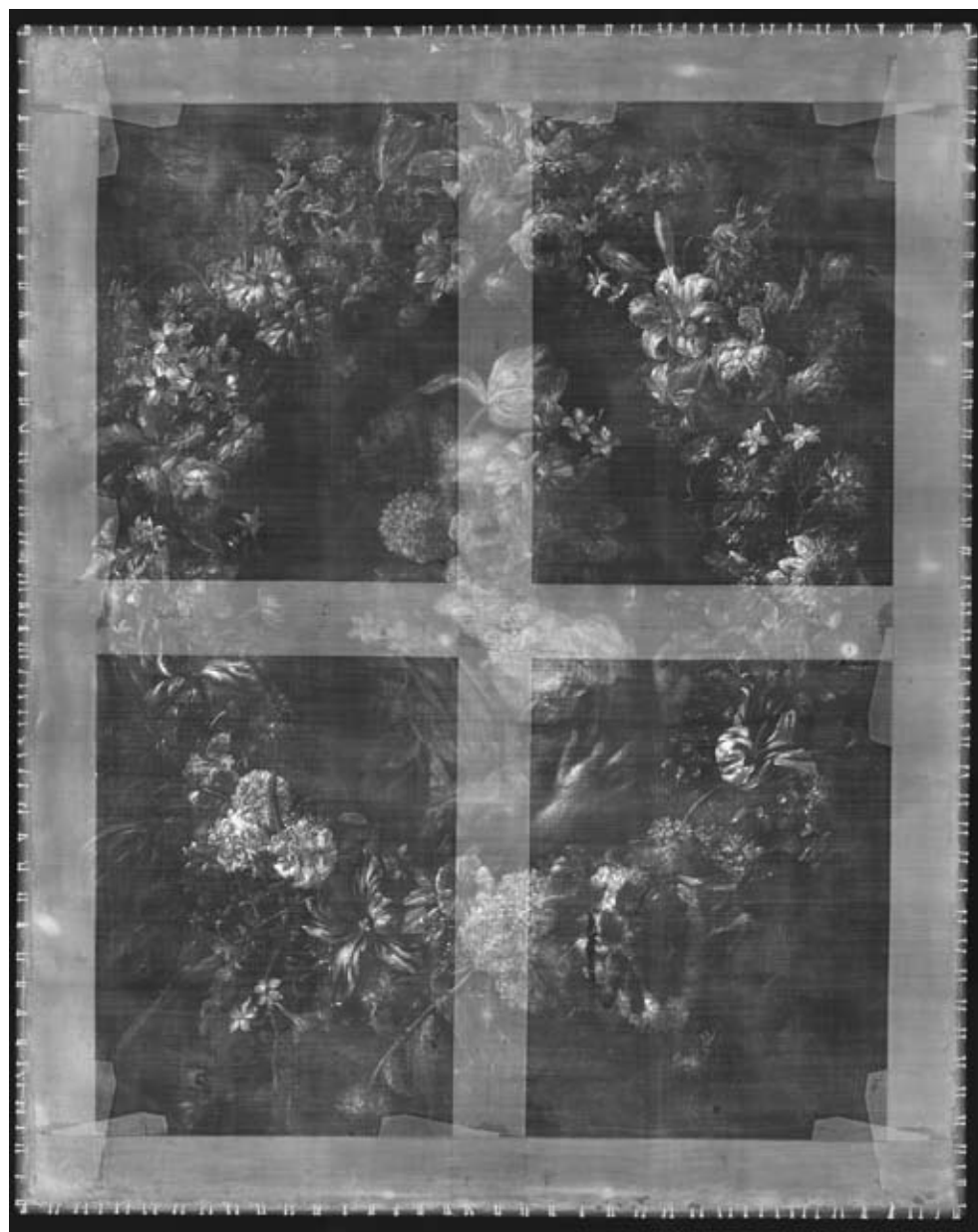
4h



features and clothing are clearly visible. She is shown half-length, wearing a dress with a low lace neckline and sleeves with many folds. Her pose and clothing seemed to portray an allegorical “Flora” figure.

The x-ray also showed an interesting feature: the woman’s interaction with the floral garland. With her left hand, she is either plucking a sprig of orange flowers from – or placing the flowers into – the garland. This convention is also seen in the work of the French flower painter Jean-Baptiste Belin de Fontenay (1653-1715). The portrait of *Helène Lambert de Thorigny* painted in ca. 1696-1700 by Belin and Nicolas de Largillière (1656-1746), shows a woman holding a sprig of flowers in the centre of a garland (fig. 6).⁹ This interaction between the central motif and the surrounding wreath seems to be a Baroque convention. Earlier paintings often separated the two parts by placing the central motif within a cartouche, or surrounding it with a square or rectangle.¹⁰ Also, the pictorial depth of the floral garland and the central motif were not usually consistent. The garland seemed to represent a frame or window through which a deeper scene is viewed. Often the wreath cast a shadow on a flat, dark background, which gave the impression that it is hanging on a wall. This convention

⁵
X-radiograph of *Garland of Flowers and Vase* (figure 1), taken during treatment. Photograph: René Gerritsen.





was used in the ICN painting. The illusion may have been further enhanced: in the top middle, the wreath seems to have originally hung from a ribbon.¹¹ During the recent treatment, the removal of varnish and overpaint near the upper edge revealed a stark vertical line, flanked by looping ribbons that alternated between dark red and lighter red-orange bands (figs. 7 and 8).¹² They stopped abruptly at the top of the composition, which raised the question of whether or not the painting had been cut down along the top edge.¹³ The ribbons were partially hidden beneath opaque brown overpaint; obviously an attempt had been made to cover them in the past, then a subsequent restoration had tried unsuccessfully to reveal them again. The overpaint in these areas had a different texture, solubility and painting style than the vase of flowers in the middle of the composition. This suggested that the central vase was

7
 Detail of figure 1: ribbon-like shapes at the top of the painting, during varnish and overpaint removal. The white lily and surrounding leaves are not original; they cover a damaged original tulip. The tallest leaves on the right side are also later additions.



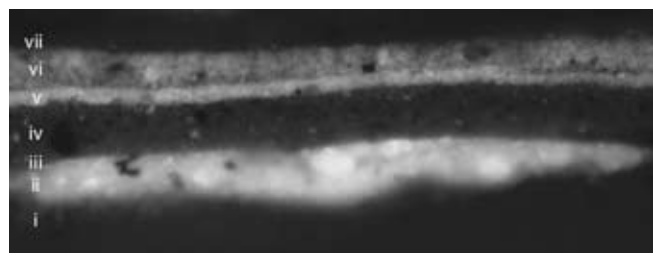
8
 Detail of figure 1: ribbons at the top of the composition, right of center, during varnish and overpaint removal. A vertical line is partially visible on the left side of the image (most is covered by dark brown overpaint). The dark green leaves that are partially covering the ribbon are later additions.



9
 Cross-section of a sample taken from the blue (overpainted) flower in the middle of *Garland of Flowers and Vase* (figure 1). Magnification: 20x. Layers from bottom to top:

- i Original brown paint layer (background): earth pigments
- ii Original flesh paint from the neck of the portrait: lead white
- iii Varnish layer
- iv Brown overpaint (background in center): lead white, yellow ochre, umber, and a little chalk and organic black pigment
- v Thinner light-coloured layer of overpaint (flower): lead white (more finely ground than lead white in layer ii)
- vi Blue overpaint (flower): lead white and ultramarine blue (most likely synthetic ultramarine)
- vii Varnish

The pigments were identified using SEM/EDX by Matthijs de Keijzer and Luc Meegens, ICN.



part of an even later campaign of alteration, although the precise date when it was painted was unknown.

Analysis of paint samples provided further information about when and how the vase in the centre was painted. Microscopic fragments of paint were taken from the original flowers in the wreath, and from areas of similar colour in the vase of flowers. The samples were mounted as cross-sections, and examined using a variety of analytical methods.¹⁴ The pigments used in the original flower garland were consistent with those used in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries. Notably, the pigment orpiment was identified in the yellow-orange flowers.¹⁵ The pigments used in the central motif were more modern: zinc was identified in several samples, suggesting zinc white, which was used as an artist's pigment from the early nineteenth century onwards.¹⁶ Therefore, the vase of flowers must have been applied in the nineteenth or twentieth century.

In cross-section, all of the samples from the central motif showed comparable layer structures. A sample taken through a blue flower in the middle of the composition shows the build-up of the original priming and paint layers, overpaint layers, and varnish (fig. 9). Over a brown ground layer, Verbruggen thinly painted the brown background (i). The next layer (ii) shows flesh tones from the portrait; the woman's neck lies beneath the blue flower. A layer of varnish (iii) separates the portrait from subsequent overpaint. The portrait was then covered with a thick brown overpaint layer (iv): the background for the vase of flowers. The flower was painted with a thin light-coloured layer (v), followed by a thicker blue paint (vi).

The reason for the overpainting in the centre of the painting was still unknown. Written records were consulted to find out more about the recent history of *Garland of Flowers and Vase*. The ICN archives supplied information about its provenance since the early 1950s, when it entered the State collection as an unclaimed restitution after World War II (Nederlands Kunstbezit). The title in the inventory is "*Vaas met Bloemen in Krans*", which confirms that the portrait had been overpainted by that time. Further archival research reconstructed the pre-war provenance of *Garland of Flowers and Vase* as far back as 1934, when it was sold at auction by Robinson & Fisher, London.¹⁷

Alongside the archival research, art historical literature was consulted for clues about the painting's history. Several publications by Marie-Louise Hairs (1960, 1975 and 1985) pertain to paintings by G.P. Verbruggen the Younger and his father. In her 1975 monograph, Hairs describes several flower garlands by Verbruggen the Younger. She mentions a *Garland with a Portrait of an Unknown Woman*, signed and dated 1691, depicting an older woman within a floral wreath, painted in the style of Belin de Fontenay.¹⁸ This important description seemed to refer to the earlier state of *Garland of Flowers and Vase*, before the central portrait was overpainted. The specification of an *older* woman was intriguing. Later in the same paragraph, Hairs describes a painting that she clearly interpreted as a different painting by Verbruggen, also signed and dated 1691: a bunch of flowers in a vase, on a ledge, surrounded by a garland of flowers.¹⁹ This must refer to the ICN painting *Garland of Flowers and Vase* in its overpainted state. Hairs believed that the before- and after-overpainting states of the ICN were two different paintings, and her publications from 1955 and 1985 repeat this misconception.²⁰

Obviously further research was needed to confirm that these two conflicting descriptions referred to the same painting. Hairs mentioned that the *Portrait of an Unknown Woman* was sold at Sotheby & Co., London, in 1927. The auction catalogue is not illustrated, but indeed includes the description of a "Portrait of a Lady enclosed in a wreath of flowers in the style of Baptiste."²¹ The Witt Library supplied an unidentified and undated photograph, accompanied by a clipping of the Sotheby's catalogue entry. Presumably, this photo records the appearance of the painting when

it was auctioned in 1927. Astonishingly, the central motif was indeed a portrait of an older woman (fig. 10). Up to this point, the x-ray of the ICN painting had been interpreted as an allegorical “Flora” figure. This was clearly a misconception, as the features on the x-ray correspond precisely to those in the photo. The fact that the Witt image shows a specific portrait, especially one of an older woman, was a surprise. This painting is undoubtedly the same one that later became *Garland of Flowers and Vase*. The floral garland is identical, apart from a few details that were subsequently overpainted. We can also be certain that the other painting that Hairs describes – the garland with a *Bunch of Flowers in a Vase* – also refers to the ICN painting. She states that it was sold in a Robinson & Fisher auction in London in 1934; this is the same auction that is mentioned in the provenance of *Garland of Flowers and Vase*.

Another record that may pertain to the ICN painting is the 1873 auction of artworks belonging to the Marquis of Rochebousau.²² It mentions a portrait of a young woman in a floral garland, signed and dated 1691, by G.P. Verbruggen the Younger and Constantijn Netscher (1668-1723). The description of the woman seems consistent: she is shown half-length facing the viewer, she holds a flower in her left hand, and has her right hand raised to her chest. In light of the discovery of the Witt photograph, the supposed attribution of the portrait to Constantijn Netscher is puzzling. Netscher, who specialized in portraits and history paintings, was active in The Hague between 1685 and 1723. As Verbruggen was working in Antwerp in 1691, it is unlikely that the two artists collaborated on this painting. Furthermore, Netscher is not known to have collaborated with Verbruggen, even though Verbruggen lived in The Hague between 1703 and 1723. The style of the portrait – as seen in the x-ray (fig. 5) and the Witt photograph (fig. 10) – does not bear much resemblance to Netscher’s female portraits. The description of a *young* woman is also perplexing, as the Witt photograph clearly shows an older woman. Given the layer structure of the cross-sections (fig. 9), it is almost impossible that the painting once showed a young woman, and was later changed into an old woman. However, no other Verbruggen paintings of a woman in a floral garland are currently known, so the connection between the ICN painting and the Rochebousau auction remains something of a mystery.

In light of the recent findings from the art historical literature, auction records, and the results from the technical examination, the probable history of *Garland of Flowers and Vase* can be pieced together. Verbruggen painted the floral garland in 1691, the year he was made dean of the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke and was at the height of his career. It is unlikely that such a large piece would have been created without a specific patron in mind, but we do not know who commissioned the painting.²³ On top of a brown ground layer and a dark brown background, Verbruggen painted the garland of flowers in a confident, vigorous manner, using vibrant colours. As was customary with these types of compositions, he left the middle empty, to be completed by another artist. In Verbruggen’s other paintings of floral garlands, the central motifs include: a statue of the *Maria Immaculata*, carved busts of a faun and a nymph, a cartouche, and animals.²⁴ No other compositions with a garland around a portrait are known.

Several of Verbruggen’s other compositions include young women holding festoons of flowers in a landscape, sometimes accompanied by putti or other characters from antique fables.²⁵ The figures in his Antwerp paintings are frequently attributed to Peter Ykens (1648-1695). The women painted by Ykens differ from the portrait that underlies the central motif in *Garland of Flowers and a Vase*; this is obvious when the sweet, oval faces by Ykens (fig. 11) are compared to the image from the Witt Library (fig. 10). Furthermore, the style of painting and the type of clothing worn by the woman in the Witt image suggest that the portrait is *not* contemporary with the flower garland. The central motif could have been painted as late as the mid-eighteenth century. It resembles German and Austrian portraits from that time, particularly those from the circle of Martin Mytens II (1695-1770).²⁶ Mytens was a court

Photograph from the Witt Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, presumably showing the state of the painting (figure 1) around the time it was sold at Sotheby's & Co in 1927. The vertical lines near the left edge and white shape in the lower left corner are damages to the photograph rather than the painting.



portraitist for the Austrian royal family in Vienna. His portraits of older women in the royal court – for example, his many paintings of the Holy Roman Empress Maria Theresa (fig. 12) – are similar to the woman pictured in the Witt photograph. The features are defined by deep shadow on one side of the face, and one of the sitter's hands gestures while the other grasps an object. These similarities with portraits from the mid-eighteenth century suggest that Verbruggen's flower garland remained empty for several decades after it was completed. This situation may seem somewhat surprising, but it is not uncommon: there are several surviving paintings of floral garlands surrounding an empty cartouche or niche, including one attributed to Gaspar Peeter Verbruggen the Younger, and several by his father.²⁷ We cannot know for certain what Verbruggen the Younger – or the person who commissioned the painting – intended the subject matter in the centre of the garland to be.

When the portrait of the older woman was added – presumably several decades later – her clothing was painted carefully around the edges of the pre-existing floral composition. It is unclear whether the orange flowers she plucks from, or is placing in, the garland were also added at that time. No information about what happened

Gaspar Peeter Verbruggen the Younger and attributed to Peter Ykens, *Young Woman and a decorated vase with flowers*, ca. 1679-1696, oil on canvas, 117,5 x 88,8 cm. Private collection. Image copyright Sotheby's London.



to the painting over the course of the next hundred years has been found. The earliest description of what seems to be this painting is the 1873 auction of the property of the Marquis de Rochebousseau. In the early twentieth century, it was owned by Mrs. Pellier Johnson, who put it up for auction at Sotheby's in 1927. At that time, the central motif was still a portrait of an older woman. Hand-written notes in several copies of the Sotheby's catalogue indicate that the painting was bought by "Field" for £52.²⁸ The following seven years are the critical ones in which the portrait was overpainted with the vase of flowers. The next mention of the painting is in 1934, when it was auctioned in London by Robinson & Fisher. At that sale, and in subsequent auctions, the subject of the painting is described simply as "flowers" or "*bloemen*".²⁹ The fact that no portrait is mentioned is strong evidence that the overpainting occurred between 1927 and 1934.³⁰

It is rather surprising that such a drastic change happened so recently. Why would a vase of flowers have been painted over the portrait? One cannot know for sure, but



there are a few possible explanations. Perhaps there was a change in the function of the painting, a change in the location where it was displayed, or a new owner. Alternatively, the portrait could have become damaged, and rather than trying to repair it, the central motif was painted on top. A more likely explanation is that whoever owned the painting between 1927 and 1934 believed that covering the portrait with a more decorative subject would increase the painting's value. Portraits of unknown sitters seldom sell for large amounts of money at auction or through an art dealer. Judging by the quality of the vase of flowers, a fairly accomplished but unimaginative artist was hired to overpaint the portrait. On top of a layer of varnish, he applied a thick brown paint to cover the portrait and emulate the background. He created the bouquet by copying flowers from Verbruggen's garland (fig. 4). As the colours he used are harmonious with the original garland in its cleaned state, it can be presumed that the varnish was not very yellow when the vase of flowers was painted. The artist may have been aware of Verbruggen's other paintings; the vase is similar to – but not a direct copy of – the antique vases in many of his floral still-lives.³¹ As part of the same campaign of overpainting, a tulip at the top of the garland was also covered by long green leaves and clusters of small blue flowers.³²

This dramatic overpainting was certainly not the first – or the last – treatment that the painting endured. Prior to the intervention in the 1930s, efforts were made to “improve” the composition. Dark leaves were added around the perimeter of the wreath, even in areas where the original paint was undamaged, and the ribbons at the top of the composition were covered with brown paint (figs. 7 and 8). In order to repair tears in the canvas, the painting was lined twice, in both cases with a glue-paste mixture. The tacking margins of the original canvas were cut off and the painting was placed on a new stretcher. The top of the canvas may have been cut down at that time; it was suggested earlier in this article that the ribbons were truncated. Unfortunately, because the tacking margins are missing, the information about the original dimensions of the canvas support has been lost.³³

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Bottom right corner of *Garland of Flowers and Vase* (figure 1), before 2007 treatment, showing cracks in the yellow varnish.



Since *Garland of Flowers and Vase* entered the state collection in the early 1950s, it has been treated twice. The 1952 restoration by Nico van Bohemen seems to have been carried out for aesthetic reasons. Van Bohemen did not remove the varnish or overpaint that was already present; he revarnished the painting, then retouched areas of damage and discoloured overpaint. Over time, the varnish continued to yellow, and disfiguring cracks developed (fig. 13). Fifty-five years later, the painting required treatment again, for both structural and aesthetic reasons.³⁴ The composition was almost illegible beneath the yellow varnish, surface dirt and old retouchings, so it was necessary to clean the painting. This process was not as simple as anticipated. It was clear that the vase in the middle was not original, but it was only at this stage of the treatment that the conservator became aware of the complications it would cause. Technical examination helped to determine what lay underneath the vase of flowers, and provided some information about the overpaint. Documents from the archives, art historical literature and auction catalogues were consulted both during and after the treatment; these helped piece together the painting's history. This process of discovery highlighted the fact that the decisions made during a conservation treatment are sometimes based on what limited information is available at the time. In this case, decisions were made in consultation with curators and conservators from the ICN, and specialists from the Netherlands Institute for Art History (Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie, RKD).³⁵ The discussion about whether or not to remove the overpaint from the middle of the painting turned out to be the most thought-provoking and challenging part of the recent treatment. Some of the arguments in favour of removing the vase of flowers – along with some

of the ethical issues that these arguments raised – are as follows:

The flowers are not “original”. Sometimes the aim of a restoration treatment is, as far as possible, to return a painting to the way the artist would have intended it to look. This may include removing subsequent applications of varnish, retouching, and overpaint. In this case, removing the vase of flowers to reveal the portrait would *not* be returning the painting to its “original” state, as the portrait is itself a non-original part of the composition. The clothing and painting style suggest that the portrait is not contemporary with the floral garland, and was certainly not painted by Verbruggen. Would returning the painting to its “original” state involve removing the portrait as well, leaving only the garland of flowers with an empty oval in the centre? We can presume that this was not Verbruggen’s intention either, as most of his other floral garlands have central motifs painted by his contemporaries.

The overall composition is compromised by the addition of the vase of flowers. It could be argued that painting a bouquet within the garland creates an overabundance of flowers; however, this type of composition is not unprecedented.³⁶ It is unfortunate that, as with any central motif, the viewer’s eye is naturally drawn to the vase of flowers before the original garland. It could, however, be argued that by directly copying the flowers from the garland, the central motif creates a pictorial harmony that allows the eye to wander to other parts of the composition.

The vase of flowers in the centre is less than a century old, and of little historical importance. In certain conservation treatments, the decision is made to preserve later additions of important historical value – such as inscriptions, coats of arms, or figures. As previously discussed, the reasons for overpainting the central motif in *Garland of Flowers and Vase* are unclear. Its significance cannot straightforwardly be assessed based on its age alone.

Removing the overpaint would reveal a portrait that has been hidden for decades. It would also give an impression of how the painting may have looked between the mid-eighteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Unfortunately, the recent findings from technical examinations, written sources, and old images do not provide enough information to make an accurate assessment of the artistic quality or condition of the portrait.³⁷ This counterargument of insufficient information was one of the major justifications for preserving the central motif of the vase of flowers. At the point in the treatment when the options were being discussed, we did not know why, or exactly when, the central motif had been overpainted. Another argument in favour of keeping the overpainted vase of flowers was that the removal of the overpaint completely changes the painting’s appearance and subject matter.

Ultimately the decision was made *not* to remove the overpainted vase of flowers from the middle of the composition.³⁸ Instead, the yellowed varnish on top of the overpaint was thinned with mild solvents that did not affect the vase of flowers. All of the materials used during the recent treatment are completely reversible and removable, so this decision could be readdressed in the future. If more information about the central motif were found and there were compelling reasons to reveal the portrait, it would be possible to remove the vase of flowers in a subsequent restoration treatment. Until then, the portrait lies waiting beneath the surface.

NOTES

¹ The painting has been on display in the Ministry of General Affairs (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken) in the Binnenhof, The Hague since 1954. Prior to this, it was exhibited at Het Catharina Gasthuis, Gouda in 1952 and in the exhibition *De Gouden Eeuw* at the Paleis-Raadhuis, Tilburg in 1953.

² From 1691 onwards, Verbruggen the Younger often signed his paintings in a Spanish or Italian manner: Gaspar (also interpreted as Gaspar, or Jasper) Pedro Verbruggen. Other variants of his signature are listed in: M. Hairs 'Autour d'un bouquet de Gaspard Verbruggen le Jeune', *Bulletin des amis des musées de Poitiers*, (1960), p. 5; M. Hairs, *Die Beiden Verbruggen: Monographie*, Vienna 1975, p. 17; M. Hairs, *Les peintres flamands de fleurs au XVIIe siècle*, Brussels 1985, pp. 325-326 and in: A. Balis, C. Nitze-Ertz, U. Kleinmann (eds.) *Das Flämische Stilleben: 1550-1680*, Kulturstiftung Ruhr Essen/Villa Hügel 2002, p. 375.

³ The styles and signatures of father and son are similar, frequently causing confusion in attributing their works. In this case, the date of the painting (1691) and the second name "Pedre/Pedro" confirms that it is by G.P. Verbruggen the Younger.

⁴ Verbruggen's pupils included Peter Frans Casteels, François d'Oliver, Gillis Vinck II, and three of his relatives: his half-brother Balthazar Hyacinthe Verbruggen, his step-brother Jacob Melchior van Herck, and his nephew Hieronymus Galle III; see Hairs 1960 (note 2), p. 4.

⁵ W. Prohaska, 'Das Geistliche Stilleben: Blumenkränze und Girlanden' in: Balis *et al.* 2002 (note 2), pp. 321-325, ill. p. 323.

⁶ This type of collaboration is discussed in: M. Hairs, 'Collaboration dans des tableaux de fleurs flamands', *Revue Belge d'Archéologie et d'Histoire d'Art*, 26 (1957), nrs. 3/4, pp. 149-162.

⁷ The composition of flowers around a *grisaille* cartouche or medallion was introduced by Daniel Seghers in about 1630, and quickly adopted by many other Antwerp flower painters; see Hairs 1975 (note 2), p. 19 and Hairs 1985 (note 2), p. 329.

⁸ The x-radiography was performed by René Gerritsen.

⁹ In the Belin/de Largillière painting, the garland appears to be suspended in mid-air, creating the effect of three-dimensional space. It floats in front of an interior space with a curtain, and behind a ledge and an attendant bearing an armload of flowers. This composition is very similar to the *Portrait of a woman surrounded by flowers* by Belin in the Musée de Beaux Arts in Caen, illustrated in: P. Mitchell, *European Flower Painters*, London 1973, p. 45. In the Caen painting, the woman is reaching through the floating garland to tie a ribbon.

¹⁰ Examples of this separation in four paintings of a *Flower Garland with Virgin and Child* by Jan Breughel the Elder are illustrated in Hairs 1985 (note 2), p. 51, ill. 17; p. 56, ill. 10; p. 57, ill. 11 with central motif by Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640); and p. 105, ill. 30 with central motif by Hendrik van Balen.

¹¹ Daniel Seghers painted several compositions in which festoons or garlands of flowers hang from ribbons, for example: *Trophée de Fleurs* from the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, illustrated in Hairs 1985 (note 2), p. 169, ill. 52. Several examples of a wreath hanging from two ribbons are also illustrated in Hairs 1985 (note 2): p. 162, ill. 49; and p. 186, ill. 51. Paintings by Johannes Davidsz. de Heem (1606-1683/1684) often include bunches of flowers and fruit hanging from blue ribbons, for example: *Garland of Fruit with Some Flowers* (Mauritshuis, The Hague) and *Festoon of Fruit and Flowers* (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), illustrated in: I. Bergström, *Dutch Still-Life Painting in the 17th Century*, New York 1983, p. 208 (Mauritshuis painting), and p. 209 (Rijksmuseum painting).

¹² Examination with infrared reflectography (IRR) revealed the looping shapes on the left side, which were covered by brown overpaint. IRR is often used to detect the presence of underdrawing; in this case, no underdrawing could be detected. A Grundig Electronic 875 vidicon camera, connected to an external monitor, was used.

¹³ This cropping may have been intentional; *Trophée de Fleurs* by G.P. Verbruggen the Elder depicts a bunch of flowers hanging from a bow that is truncated at the top (Würzburg, Martin von Wagner Museum); illustrated in Hairs 1985 (note 2), p. 326, ill. 100.

¹⁴ The cross-sections were examined using stereomicroscopy in normal and ultraviolet (UV) light. The pigments were identified using x-ray fluorescence (XRF). One sample (fig. 9) was analysed further using scanning electron microscopy and energy-dispersive radiography (SEM/EDX). The SEM/EDX analysis was performed at the ICN by Matthijs de Keijzer and Luc Meegens.

¹⁵ The use of orpiment (arsenic sulphide) as an artist's pigment was confined almost exclusively to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It often deteriorates over time; this phenomenon was apparent in the cracked appearance of the yellow-orange flowers in the Verbruggen painting. The deterioration of orpiment in a flower painting by de Heem is described in: A. Wallert and J. Dik, 'The scientific examination of a seventeenth-century masterpiece', *Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung*, 2007, pp. 38-51.

¹⁶ The presence of zinc could also indicate the use of zinc yellow ($4\text{ZnO} \cdot 4\text{CrO}_3 \cdot \text{K}_2\text{O} \cdot 3\text{H}_2\text{O}$), but as no chromium (Cr) was detected in the samples, it was more likely to be zinc white (ZnO).

¹⁷ Project Office Origins Unknown Bureau (Herkomst Gezocht, www.originsunknown.org, www.herkomst-gezocht.nl) supplied the following reconstruction of the painting's provenance: Sale Robinson & Fisher, London 29-06-1934; Sale Frederik Muller, Amsterdam 5/20-11-1940; D.A. Hoogendijk & Co. (art dealer), Amsterdam; G. Paffrath (art dealer), Düsseldorf 20-11-1940.

¹⁸ Hairs 1975 (note 2), pp. 32-33: "*Girlande mit dem Porträt einer Unbekannten* (Leinwand 150 x 110 cm), signiert und datiert 1691 (London, Sotheby and Co, Versteigerung Wellis, 9. November 1927, Nr. 104). Die ältere Dame erscheint in der Mitte eines Blumenkranzes, in der Art wie Blin de Fontenay malte, der mit Antoine Coypel zusammenarbeitete (Caen, Musée de Beaux-Arts) oder Nicolas de Largillière (Honolulu, Academie of Arts)." The connection between the ICN painting and these works by Belin de Fontenay was mentioned earlier in this article.

¹⁹ Hairs 1975 (note 2), p. 33: "Auf anderen Bildern umschließen Girlanden kreisförmig einen *Blumenstrauß in einer Vase*, der auf einem Sims steht. Die Originalität

dieser Bildgestaltung zielt mehrere signierte Gemälde (1691 London, Robinson & Fisher Galleries, Versteigerung 29. Juni 1934, Nr. 34; 160 x 130 cm, Amsterdam, Galerie Smidt van Gelder, 1934).²⁰

²⁰ M. Hairs, *Les Peintres Flamands de Fleurs au XVIIe Siècle*, Paris/Brussels 1955, pp. 248-249: *Guirlande de Fleurs serpentant autour d'un Vase garni d'un bouquet*, and *Guirlande de Fleurs autour d'un Portrait de Dame âgée*; Hairs 1985 (note 2), p. 409: *Guirlande avec le Portrait d'une Inconnue*, and a painting that falls under the category of "les guirlandes encerclent de leurs rameaux un bouquet dans un vase déposé sur une tablette." The fact that Hairs interpreted these as separate paintings suggests that either she didn't see one or both of the paintings in person, or that she was working from written notes rather than side-by-side images.

²¹ Sotheby & Co. London, no. 104, The Property of Mrs. Pellier Johnson, 12 Hans Place, S.W. Hairs 1975 (note 2) and other written sources refer to the "Wellis" or "Willis" sale; this was the name of another collector whose property was auctioned on the same day.

²² *Catalogue de Tableaux de premier ordre Anciens et Modernes*, auctioned 5-8 May 1873, Lugt #33985: "96: Portrait de jeune femme dans une guirlande de fleurs. Une riche guirlande de fleurs de toute espèce entour le portrait d'une jeune femme, vue de face en buste, la main relevée vers la poitrine et tenant une fleur de la main gauche. Le portrait est de Constantin Netscher. Peinture d'un bel aspect décoratif. Signé en toutes lettres, en bas, à gauche, par Verbruggen, et daté 1691, Toile. Haut, 1 m. 34 cm; larg. 1 m. 07 cm." Eric Domela (curator at the ICN) found a reference to this auction under the name of the artist Netscher, Constantyn in: A. von Wurzbach, *Niederländisches Künstler-Lexicon*, Wien/Leipzig 1910, reprint 1974.

²³ "A large painting was more likely to have been commissioned than a small one, since artists were naturally reluctant to spend too much time on a work if they were unsure of finding a buyer." P. Taylor, *Dutch Flower Painting: 1600-1720*, New Haven/London 1985, p. 96.

²⁴ These floral garlands are mentioned in Hairs 1985 (note 2), pp. 409-501: *Garland of flowers with a Virgin* (Cologne, Galerie Lempertz, sold 05/1969, no. 158); pendant paintings of a *Bust of a faun* and

Bust of a nymph (Brussels, Galerie Fernand Fievez, C.L. Bayart sale, 10/12/1928, no. 77-78), *Garland around a cartouche* (Musée de Beaux Arts, Tournai), pendant paintings of *Flowers and a monkey* and *Flowers and a parrot* (Bayerischen Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich), ill. 125-126, p. 500.

²⁵ For example, two paintings of a *Vase of flowers with an allegorical figure* dated 1688 and 1696, both Koninklijk Museum, Antwerp; illustrated in Hairs 1985 (note 2), p. 500, ill. 124.; and Hairs 1975 (note 2) p. 36, ill. 17.

²⁶ This attribution was suggested by Ursula de Goede, clothing specialist from the Department of Foreign Painting at the Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD). Two relatives of Martin Mytens II – Johannes Mytens (1613/1614-1670) and Daniel Mytens (1644-1688) – painted compositions with women surrounded by floral garlands: see A.N. Bauer, *Jan Mijtens (1613/13-1670): Leben und Werk eines Haager Porträtmalers*, Bad Windsheim 2006, pp. 388 and 456.

²⁷ A painting of an empty niche surrounded by flowers, attributed to Verbruggen the Younger, was sold at Christie's, New York, 24-01-2003, no. 143. Several examples are attributed to his father, G.P. Verbruggen the Elder, for example: *Garland of Flowers around an empty cartouche*, Bayerischen Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich illustrated in Hairs 1985 (note 2), p. 327, ill. 103. Examples by Daniel Seghers are illustrated in: Hairs 1985 (note 2), p. 158, ill. 41; p. 159, ill. 42; and p. 161, ill. 43.

²⁸ Although we do not know for certain, "Field" could be Marshall (Lord Grenfell, C.G.) Field, who bought other works of art from Sotheby's London on 06-03-1918 (information from RKD card catalogue of auction buyers).

²⁹ For example, Sale Muller & Co, 5 to 8-11-1940, no. 498: *Bloemen*, by Kaspar P. Verbruggen. The catalogue describes the garland and the central motif of a bouquet in an earthenware pot.

³⁰ The provenance has been reconstructed as follows: in 1927, the painting was sold at Sotheby & Co, London, no. 104, as a portrait of a lady enclosed in a wreath of flowers. Subsequently, the central motif was overpainted with flowers, then the painting was auctioned at Robinson & Fisher, London, no. 24, Moore-Brabazon sale. There

are conflicting dates for this sale: either 28 or 29-06-1934. After (or perhaps, as a result of) this auction, the painting ended up in the collection of Smidt van Gelder, Amsterdam in 1934. This sale fills in a missing step in the provenance of the ICN painting listed on the Origins Unknown website (see note 17). This intermediary step is highly likely, as Smidt van Gelder was somehow associated with Frederik Muller at another auction in 1921 (information from RKD card catalogues of auction buyers). The painting reappeared in another Robinson & Fisher auction on 18-02-1937, no. 13 (see Hairs 1955 (note 19) and Witt Library microfiche). On 5-11-1940, the painting was auctioned at Frederik Muller, Amsterdam, then was in the hands of D.A. Hoogendijk & Co. (art dealer) 5/20-11-1940, Amsterdam, and G. Paffrath (art dealer), Düsseldorf 20-11-1940. It entered the state collection after World War II.

³¹ The ornamental vases in Verbruggen's still-lives were often painted by specialist artists. In his Antwerp paintings, he collaborated with Peeter-Frans Bailliu (1644-1727). In the paintings he completed in The Hague, the vases are attributed to Mattheus Terwesten (1670-1757).

³² The original tulip is visible in the Witt photograph (fig. 10), at the top of the garland to the left of centre. This area may have been overpainted because of damage or pigment degradation.

³³ The current dimensions of the ICN painting are 140 x 110 cm. There is conflicting information about the painting's size in the written records and art historical literature. This often occurs when the dimensions are estimated, or are based on the frame size. Hairs 1985 (note 2) lists the size of the *Garland with a Portrait of an Unknown Woman* as 150 x 110 cm, and that of the garland with a *Bunch of Flowers in a Vase* as 160 x 130 cm. The catalogue from the 1927 Sotheby's sale (note 21) lists the size as 60" by 44" (approximately 152 x 112 cm). The 1873 auction of the property of the Marquis de Rochebousseau (note 22) listed the size as 134 cm x 107 cm.

³⁴ The 2007 treatment and technical examination was carried out by the author, Abbie Vandivere, who is a freelance Conservator/Restorer at the ICN. The structural treatment involved strip-lining the painting; the tacking margins of the second

lining canvas had become torn, so new strips of canvas were attached around the perimeter. Neither of the earlier linings was removed.

³⁵ The author would like to thank the following people for their expertise and assistance: Eric Domela (curator at the ICN), Susanne Stangier (former Conservator/Restorer at the ICN), Madeleine Bisschoff (former Conservator/Restorer at the ICN), and Fred Meijer (still-life specialist and curator of seventeenth-century painting at the RKD).

³⁶ A painting (incorrectly) attributed to the circle of Jean-Michel Picart (1600-1682) shows an oval wreath surrounding a bunch of roses. The painting was auctioned at Christie's, South Kensington, 05-07-2000, no. 343.

³⁷ In the Witt Library image, the painting appears to be in good condition; however, one cannot accurately assess its current state from an old, slightly fuzzy, black-and-white photograph (fig. 10). Many things could have happened to the painting since the photograph was made. The x-ray taken during the recent treatment seems to show only small damages, including paint losses in the woman's neck (fig. 5). This suggests that the paint layer is largely intact, but it can be misleading to draw these conclusions on the basis of an x-ray. Only heavy pigments – like lead white – are visible on the x-ray, so it is impossible to see whether areas of shadow and glazes that define the facial features have been abraded or removed. The surface of the portrait may even have been sanded down to give it a flat surface before being

overpainted; fine diagonal scratches are visible in the brightest areas of the x-ray.

³⁸ This decision had implications for the removal of overpaint in other areas of the picture. As was mentioned earlier in the article, the original ribbons at the top of the composition had been overpainted in an early (possibly nineteenth-century) restoration, then partially cleaned. Also, the top of the composition may have been cut off. In the recent treatment, the area above the garland was retouched to blend in with the background. The overall composition is now similar to the way we assume it looked when it entered the state collection: with the central motif overpainted with the vase of flowers, and with the ribbons at the top of the composition overpainted to blend in with the background.