

## The Craeyvanger Portraits in Context – Shedding Light on Caspar Netscher’s Early Career\*

Reconstructing the first tentative steps of an artist’s career is an engrossing challenge for the art historian: one has only to think of the many recent exhibitions and studies devoted to the young Rembrandt, for example, to gauge the magnetic appeal of the subject. How did an artist *become* that artist and not another? What were the decisive circumstances and opportunities that steered him down a particular path? Unfortunately, this crucial period of absorption and focused experimentation is often the least well documented, and therefore least well understood, portion of an artist’s career. The addition or elimination of a single work from the corpus might result in a completely different image of the artist’s development. The unexpected discovery of Caspar Netscher’s signature on four canvasses from the suite of ten Craeyvanger family portraits (see pp. 7, 11-12, figs. 2, 8-10), and the re-emergence of the fine *Portrait of a Young Man* (fig. 5), have dramatically expanded the number of works that can be reliably attributed to the fledgling painter, and as a result have broadened our understanding of his earliest career.

Just a handful of paintings – about a dozen at most – can be dated to the late 1650s, when Netscher was active in the studio of Gerard ter Borch in Deventer.<sup>2</sup> They are a diverse group of works, encompassing portraits and genre scenes, faithful replicas and independent compositions, and presenting a bewildering spectrum of styles and degrees of technical proficiency. The new discoveries have prompted a reassessment of this phase of Netscher’s career, and in particular a closer examination of the working relationship that existed between him and his mentor Ter Borch: they were master, pupil, independent artists and occasional collaborators. This is admittedly rocky terrain. There is much we do not know about the day-to-day realities of workshop practice and collaboration among painters in the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century – and indeed we know frustratingly little about the specific workings of Ter Borch’s studio in Deventer.<sup>2</sup> However, the additional evidence presented by these newly revealed paintings helps construct a clearer picture of Netscher’s activities in Ter Borch’s studio and his gradual development towards becoming an independent master.

Based partly on the existence of a copy after Ter Borch’s *Gallant Company* (the so-called ‘*Paternal Admonition*’, fig. 2), signed and dated 1655 (fig. 1), and partly on the evidence of Netscher’s own likeness in several genre paintings by Ter Borch dating from the mid- to late 1650s,<sup>3</sup> it is generally agreed that he was present in the latter’s studio from about 1655 until about 1658 or 1659, when he departed for Bordeaux.<sup>4</sup> Netscher was not a complete neophyte when he came to Ter Borch; according to Houbraken, he had first studied with Hendrick Coster (1610/1620 - 1664 or later), an Arnhem painter of portraits, still lifes, and the occasional candlelight scene.<sup>5</sup> It is not clear what – if anything – Netscher might have appropriated of Coster’s style or technique; indeed, this phase of his education is likely to have been of a rather basic nature, devoted to gaining technical facility rather than inculcating the refinements of a particular style.<sup>6</sup> Coster’s move to Groningen

in the mid-1650s probably precipitated Netscher's own move to Deventer and his induction into the studio of Gerard ter Borch.

Netscher's apprenticeship with Ter Borch was probably fairly typical, a mutually beneficial relationship that exchanged practical training for workshop assistance. We do not know what sort of contract (if any) was negotiated between the young aspirant and the master painter, but a hypothetical reconstruction of such a document could provide a key to making sense of the diverse group of paintings that Netscher is credited with producing during these years.<sup>7</sup> Ronald de Jager's study of existing seventeenth-century contracts between master painters and their would-be pupils suggests that although there was a fair amount of variation, each contract covered the same basic points: the duration of the contract and its cost, the type of instruction to be imparted and the desired outcome for both master and student.<sup>8</sup> As each point was open to negotiation, it was effectively possible to customize an individual pupil's experience in accordance with his needs, skills, and financial capability, whilst still conforming to local guild regulations. Typically, the period of tuition averaged about three or four years; it was not unusual for a pupil to then complete his education with one or two years' additional study with a different master.<sup>9</sup> While most contracts stated in general terms that the pupil was to learn painting and 'related skills', and sometimes [life] drawing, only occasionally do they stipulate that the pupil was to be trained in the same kind of painting as practiced by the master. Some



<sup>1</sup> Caspar Netscher, *The 'Paternal Admonition'*, 1655, canvas, 79 x 66 cm. Gotha, Museen der Stadt Gotha, Schlossmuseum.

pupils came exclusively for tuition, but most also performed some sort of work in the studio. Whether this was in exchange for a wage, or a reduction in fees, was specified in the contract. The work itself ranged from unskilled tasks unrelated to painting to actual painting on behalf of the workshop. Some shorter-term contracts were negotiated for relatively low fees, suggesting that the pupil (presumably an older, more advanced one in his 'post-graduate' phase of study) defrayed some of the cost of his training by assuming a greater role in the productions of the master's studio. This could involve participating in the execution of paintings initiated by the master as well as making independent paintings for which the master provided the materials and would therefore control the profit from their sale. In sum, for the duration of his apprenticeship the pupil was expected to work diligently and conscientiously to the 'profit and advantage' of his master.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, a number of the contracts studied by De Jager make it clear that pupils could also work independently (albeit on a somewhat restricted basis) while still under contract to the master: the pupil was allowed to make his own paintings in his free time, and even – under certain circumstances, at least – to reap the profit from their eventual sale.

Contracts were thus pragmatically designed to provide the master with the sort of assistance he needed in exchange for practical tuition, while simultaneously encouraging the pupil's eventual independence by affording him increased responsibility in the



<sup>2</sup>  
Gerard ter Borch, *Gallant Conversation (The 'Paternal Admonition')*, c. 1654 / 1655, canvas, 70 x 60 cm. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie.

3  
Caspar Netscher, *Portrait of a Man*,  
1656, panel, 28 x 22.5 cm.  
The Hague, Private collection.



productions of the workshop and the opportunity to experiment with producing and selling his own compositions. With a feel for the general tenor of these contracts, we can imagine the type of arrangement that might have been made between Ter Borch and Netscher – if, indeed, any formal document ever existed. Given the well-documented importance of drawings in the Ter Borch studio, draftsmanship, and the use of drawings as an aid to composing paintings, was undoubtedly a significant part of the tuition Netscher received from Ter Borch.<sup>11</sup> As he already had a few years of training under his belt, Netscher would presumably have been allotted a fairly advanced role in the productions of the workshop, which would have expanded in scope and responsibility as his skills matured. Finally, it seems reasonable to assume that Netscher would have been permitted to produce paintings of his own design, in his own time, and to profit from their sale.

Understanding the varied circumstances under which the young artist-in-training might have produced a given work provides a handy – if hypothetical – framework to account for the inconsistencies and seeming contradictions posed by the dozen or so paintings attributed to Netscher's earliest years as a painter. Though few in number, they pose some stubbornly intractable problems of attribution and chronology: signed and dated works that seem more competently painted than ones dated years later, and a

4  
Caspar Netscher, *Portrait of a Woman*, 1656, panel,  
28 x 22.5 cm. The Hague,  
Private collection.



helter-skelter mix of independent compositions, creative variants and exact replicas of paintings by Ter Borch, all purporting to originate within the same four-year period. Admittedly, not all of these early works can be so easily hung upon this framework, but it seems a reasonable base on which to build.

If one of Netscher's primary responsibilities whilst under Ter Borch's tutelage was to work for the benefit of the master's workshop, he would likely have been involved in producing replicas of popular genre compositions by Ter Borch, or possibly aiding in the execution of commissioned works such as portraits.<sup>12</sup> Most if not all of this work would have been unsigned, as the paintings would have issued from the studio under Ter Borch's banner and for his profit. Since the goal was that they pass as Ter Borchs – though not with any deceptive intent – any individual stylistic quirks or distinguishing marks on the part of the assistant would have been firmly suppressed. Indeed, many such replicas were made (whether by Ter Borch himself or an associate) using tracings or cartoons to ensure maximum fidelity to the original.<sup>13</sup> With no signatures to guide us, there is little to help identify any of the many faithful contemporary copies of Ter Borch's genre scenes as paintings by the young Netscher. Gudlaugsson purported to see Netscher's hand in a number of such works, but it is difficult to find a coherent logic in some of these attributions.<sup>14</sup>



A more rewarding study can be made of the paintings Netscher made during his apprenticeship that are not only signed, but show promising individuality: variants that take a deliberate departure from Ter Borch's original; and paintings which, though certainly reliant upon the master's example, are nonetheless fully independent compositions.

Technically, guild regulations in cities throughout the Netherlands stipulated that pupils could not sign their works while still working in their master's studio. This was not always strictly enforced, however, and there are a number of documented examples of paintings signed by artists before they became independent masters.<sup>15</sup> The absence of a painter's guild in Deventer undoubtedly meant a more relaxed attitude towards any such regulation, and the matter may have been left to the discretion of the individual master. Several signed paintings by Netscher bear dates between 1655 and 1659, and these comprise the main focus of this article. The earliest of these is his variant copy (fig. 1) after the Berlin version of Ter Borch's *Gallant Conversation* (*The Paternal Admonition*) (fig. 2) which is signed and dated 1655.<sup>16</sup> In this exercise, Netscher altered the dimensions of the original to a more vertical format and elongated the figures accordingly; he also changed details of the still life of objects on the table, the ribbons woven through the young woman's elaborate coiffure, and the colours of the feathers decorating the young

man's hat and the ribbons adorning his breeches. Interestingly, in Netscher's version the pattern of folds in the white satin gown does not reproduce those of the famed original (Ter Borch's virtual trademark), but are independently conceived and quite creditably painted. The painting is thus not a simple copy, mechanically traced from the original, but a fresh reworking of the composition. Many passages are rendered with impressive skill and sensitivity – Netscher even captured the reddish gleam of reflected light along the back of the man's waistcoat – but other areas are quite clumsy. The figures are flat and stiff, possessing little of Ter Borch's easy grace, and the composition as a whole seems rather mechanical. In this early effort, moreover, Netscher fails to achieve the subtle differentiation of surface textures that is such a delightful characteristic not only of paintings by Ter Borch, but also of his own mature works.

Four extant paintings by Netscher, all portraits, are dated or datable in the following year; two of these are recent discoveries. The *Portrait of a Man*, *Portrait of a Woman* and *Portrait of a Young Man* (figs. 3-5)<sup>17</sup> attest to Netscher's quick assimilation of Ter Borch's successful formula for small-scale portraits: figures seen at three-quarter length, starkly posed before plain, subtly shaded backgrounds. The three panels are smoothly and finely painted; they are prominently signed by Netscher and dated 1656. The poses for the man and woman are based on Ter Borch's pendant portraits of Willem Everwijn and Johanna Kelffken, painted in 1653 (see p. 15, figs. 12-13). Netscher introduced only minor variations in the portrait of the woman but more extensive changes in that of the man: whereas Everwijn is soberly shrouded in a bulky cloak, the subject of Netscher's portrait sports a costume that is flamboyant and fashionable, with a broad collar, billowing sleeves, and riotously impractical double cuffs. With his left hand he holds a pair of gloves; with his right he clutches the brim of his hat. It is tempting to read in these changes intimations of a more baroque sensibility, which eventually led Netscher to create the highly decorative portraits that were the signature achievement of his career. The elegance of the borrowed poses and relative fineness of the execution initially makes the portraits appear quite accomplished, but again, awkward passages betray the hand of an untried painter. In the man's portrait, for example, the foreshortening of the arms is poorly understood, and there is palpable hesitation in rendering the extravagantly frilly cuffs, a detail which in the hands of a more confident master would undoubtedly have become a showpiece of virtuosic brio.

The third portrait of the group, the recently re-discovered *Portrait of a Young Man* (fig. 5) is similar in conception and technique to the other two works; unlike them, however, a number of changes were made to the figure during the painting process. Pentimenti visible to the naked eye (and even more apparent in the X-ray image) show that the subject's right arm was originally bent at the elbow, with the hand touching the centre of his chest.<sup>18</sup> The X-ray image also reveals that his left arm was originally much shorter, with the hand positioned roughly below where the white cuff was subsequently painted. The modifications to the pose and figural proportions were probably necessary because (in contrast to the other two portraits) they had not previously been worked out in another composition. The hands themselves are painted in two quite different manners, the left with fluid, blended strokes, and the right using shorter strokes in a more 'dabbled' technique.

X-ray images also reveal that all three of the portraits were quite extensively under-painted: the so-called 'dead colouring' in which the main forms of the composition were blocked out in even mid-tones, to be followed by the application of thinner layers of paint and glazes to produce the highlights and shadows.<sup>19</sup> One of the several models that have been proposed for a collaborative working process in seventeenth-century artists' studios hypothesizes that the master 'could have blocked in the composition on the canvas or panel before it was completed by an assistant' and/or that the master may have intervened along the way to correct, modify, or apply finishing touches to the pupil's work.<sup>20</sup> After a year or so working in Ter Borch's studio, Caspar Netscher may well have

6  
Caspar Netscher (and Gerard ter Borch?), *Interior with a Sleeping Soldier*, c. 1658, panel, 68.5 x 58 cm. Private collection.

7  
Gerard ter Borch, *The Sleeping Soldier*, c. 1656/1657, canvas, 65.3 x 55 cm. Cincinnati, The Taft Museum.

been proficient enough to assume sole responsibility for the design and execution of these three portraits, basing the poses for two of them on completed prototypes by Ter Borch (and fussing a bit more over the third). But it is also conceivable that Ter Borch may have blocked out the initial design for his young student to complete, possibly also intervening as work progressed to suggest modifications to contour or pose. There is, of course, no way to prove either supposition. But the fact that these three paintings – remarkably sure, and so remarkably similar in design to Ter Borch’s own portraits – are followed by paintings that are more independent in design but perhaps less competent in execution, would suggest that the master supervised their planning and execution quite closely.

Painted in 1655 or 1656, Netscher’s near life-sized *Portrait of Christine van der Wart*, the wife of Willem Craeyvanger (see p. 7, fig. 2), is a rare departure from the small-scale paintings that daily surrounded him in Ter Borch’s studio and eventually became the focus of his own mature oeuvre.<sup>21</sup> Whatever the genesis of the commission, Netscher was obliged to adjust his style to match the portrait of Craeyvanger that had been painted approximately five years earlier, in 1651, by Paulus Lesire (1612 - after 1651) (see p. 7, fig. 1). Van der Wart’s likeness is elegant in its simplicity; as in the pendant, the figure is positioned against a warm brown background animated with subtle cloud-like patterns. There are marked differences, however. Netscher does not adopt Lesire’s smooth and stylized grace, epitomized in Craeyvanger’s attenuated and boneless hands, but instead depicts Van der Wart with sympathetic and homely realism. Her left hand, resting on the back of the chair, is painted using the same ‘dabbled’ technique seen (albeit on a much smaller scale) in the *Portrait of a Young Man* (fig. 5), painted in 1656.<sup>22</sup> The *Portrait of Christine van der Wart* is signed at lower left and inscribed with the sitter’s age, but the inscription is so finely and faintly drawn as to be nearly imperceptible. This may have been done deliberately, to minimize the immediate impact of the two pendants having been painted by different artists. The same may also be true of the portraits of the eight Craeyvanger children, painted a few years later by Netscher and Ter Borch: the inscriptions on the four painted by Netscher are equally faint (see below, and the article by Van Suchtelen and Potjer). The other possibility – that Netscher ‘secreted’ his signature so as





not to run afoul of guild regulations concerning pupils signing their own works – is, as has been argued above, not likely to have been the primary reason for doing so.

Netscher was not only honing his skills as a portraitist during these years. A look at some of his genre paintings from around 1658 show him gaining technical mastery while at the same time making an effort to reduce his dependence on Ter Borch through a more thoughtful reworking of his sources. One of the more interesting works from this period, *Interior with a Sleeping Soldier* (fig. 6), is jointly signed on the letter held by the woman by both Netscher and Ter Borch.<sup>23</sup> Whether the painting was worked on together by the two artists or whether – perhaps more likely – it was a painting produced by Netscher on behalf of the workshop and officially ‘sanctioned’ by Ter Borch through the act of affixing his monogram, it undoubtedly marks a key stage in the young painter’s progress toward becoming an independent master.<sup>24</sup> *Interior with a Sleeping Soldier* is a creative reinterpretation of Ter Borch’s *The Sleeping Soldier* of about 1656/1657 in the Taft Museum, Cincinnati (fig. 7); the changes introduced are both extensive and instructive.<sup>25</sup> While the figure of the sleeping soldier is much the same in the two paintings, the pose, costume and accessories of the messenger and the woman have been considerably modified. As in Netscher’s copy after the *Paternal Admonition*’ (fig. 1), the figures are somewhat attenuated; they are grouped more tightly and pushed deeper into the pictorial space, which has the effect of lessening the immediacy of the narrative. Some details have been simplified – the feathers adorning the sleeping soldier’s hat, the arrangement of objects on the table – to produce a more modest, less luxurious effect. But the changes to the woman are the most (and paradoxically also the least) revealing: gone is the beguiling dishabille of Ter Borch’s young woman; Netscher’s girl wears her *jak* modestly closed and shrouds her head with a kerchief. By reaching to tickle her dozing companion with her right (rather than her left) hand, she creates a physical barrier, effectively closing off any opportunity for flirtatious engagement with either the soldiers within the painting or the keen viewer without. Ter Borch’s painting charms us with its gentle infusions of knowing humour and coy sensuality; Netscher deploys the physical elements of the

8  
Caspar Netscher, *The Guardroom*,  
c. 1658, canvas, 97.2 x 82.2 cm.  
Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of  
Art (John G. Johnson Collection).

9  
Gerard ter Borch, *Guardroom  
Scene*, c. 1656/1657, panel,  
63.3 x 47.9 cm. Private collection.

10  
Caspar Netscher, *Lady Washing  
her Hands*, 1657 or 1659, panel,  
49.3 x 40.3 cm. The Kremer  
Collection.



composition with reasonable competence, but has yet to approximate Ter Borch's sensitivity to human emotion, psychological nuance, and saucy wit.

*The Guardroom* (fig. 8), painted in about 1658 and based on Ter Borch's *Guardroom Scene* of about 1656/1657 (fig. 9), is another revealing demonstration of the ways in which Netscher tried to 'improve' upon his model.<sup>26</sup> The drinking soldier and the trumpeter are more or less mirror images, reversed in position from their counterparts in the original. The trumpeter is seen from behind, not from the side, and the smoker standing at the rear looks not at his colleague's impressive guzzling but swivels his head sharply towards the inquisitive maid. These and other changes, implemented with varying degrees of success, show an artist eager to experiment, but perhaps not yet entirely at ease composing a complex, multi-figured scene. It is difficult to determine the positions of the figures in the space relative to each other. Like *Interior with a Sleeping Soldier*, the painting lacks the subtle psychological depth of the original: while in the *Guardroom Scene* Ter Borch created a feeling of relaxed camaraderie amongst the three men, Netscher's figures remain oddly detached, a compilation of individual elements lacking a common bond. Although similar to *Interior with a Sleeping Soldier* and undoubtedly close to it in date, *The Guardroom* bears Netscher's signature only. Netscher may have produced the painting on his own initiative, separate from his work for the Ter Borch workshop. Coincidentally,



Netscher's signature on this painting was for many years concealed beneath a false 'GTB' monogram.<sup>27</sup>

1658 was surely a momentous year for Netscher. As he neared the end of his apprenticeship with Gerard ter Borch, we witness independent works gaining in skill and confidence, and possible workshop productions rewarded with the master's approbation in the form of a joint signature. In this year as well, Netscher seems to have worked together on equal footing with Ter Borch to complete a large portrait commission: the eight individual likenesses of the Craeyvanger children (see pp. 8-12, figs. 3-10).

Ter Borch seems to have relied on a judicious division of labour to streamline production of this large commission, assigning several of the canvasses to his most advanced assistant, Caspar Netscher. It would appear that Netscher was given responsibility for portraying the younger children, as the portraits of Gerrit, Lijsbeth and Naleke all bear his signature; Gerrit's is also dated 1658 (see p. 11, fig. 8, p. 13, fig. 11). None of the other portraits are signed (although there are traces of an inscription on the portrait of Peter Craeyvanger; see the article by Van Suchtelen and Potjer), but this should not be interpreted to mean that they were not painted by Ter Borch. A quick survey of the works catalogued by Gudlaugsson suggests that Ter Borch probably signed less than half of the portraits plausibly attributed to him.

The manner in which the portraits are painted suggests that the commission was executed rather quickly. All eight paintings are thinly and directly painted on the prepared canvas support, without the time-consuming buildup of thin layers and glazes that one finds in more finely wrought paintings by Ter Borch. One of the portraits, that of the eight-year-old Peter Craeyvanger (see p. 11, fig. 7), appears barely finished: it is even more thinly painted than the rest, the folds of his garments are harshly shaded, and his left hand is not fully painted. In the remaining portraits the manner of painting and the lack of fine finish was undoubtedly a conscious pragmatic decision, taken in order to complete the commission with utmost speed and efficiency (see further the article by Van Suchtelen and Potjer).

Although the series is surprisingly homogeneous, it is possible to distinguish Netscher's contributions from the paintings most probably painted by Ter Borch. The portraits of the four oldest boys highlight Ter Borch's ability to create solid and volumetric forms, firmly grounded in the space, with a remarkable economy of means; in contrast, Netscher's subjects – the four youngest children – seem frail and insubstantial, as if daunted by the space around them. Individual details such as the hands are more competently rendered in the portraits of the older children than in those of the younger.



<sup>12</sup>  
Caspar Netscher (?), *Portrait of a Man*, 1659, panel, 50.2 x 41.2 cm.  
Worcester, MA, Worcester Art  
Museum.

The lack of finish (and undecipherable inscription) on the portrait of Peter Craeyvanger slightly complicates the attribution of this work, but a certain meagerness in the conception of the figure and a characteristic list to his posture suggest that Netscher may have been responsible for its execution as well. We do not know if this remarkably fluid collaboration between Ter Borch and Netscher was an isolated occurrence – no other documented examples are known – but standard workshop practice would reasonably suggest that Netscher may have had a hand in other portrait commissions produced in the Ter Borch workshop toward the end of the 1650s.

Although further unsigned works by Netscher may yet be discovered among the voluminous productions of the Ter Borch workshop, prudence dictates the present discussion (which may perhaps lay the groundwork for future studies) be limited to those paintings that can be substantiated by a signature. Netscher's *Lady Washing her Hands* (fig. 10) is an independent work that draws heavily upon a well-known painting of the same subject by Ter Borch of about 1655, now in the Gemäldegalerie, Dresden (fig. 11).<sup>28</sup> Netscher's painting is signed and dated; the last digit of the date is unclear and could be either a '7' or a '9'.<sup>29</sup> The brushwork in the painting is a bit dry, not smoothly blended, but the overall competence of the handling and the more successful volumetric conception



<sup>13</sup>  
Caspar Netscher (?), *Portrait of a Girl*, 1659, panel, 20.3 x 16.3 cm.  
Munich, Bayerische  
Staatsgemäldesammlungen,  
Alte Pinakothek.

of the figures might support the later of the two dates. The painting marks a transition between Netscher's earlier genre paintings, which are transparently adapted from paintings by Ter Borch; and slightly later works, such as the *Presentation of a Medallion Portrait* (Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum) or *The Toilet* (Basel, Kunstmuseum), both probably painted about 1659, which are fully independent creations harbouring only distant echoes of their roots in the Ter Borch workshop.<sup>30</sup>

A date of about 1659 for the *Lady Washing her Hands* would sit comfortably with the idealistic notion that Netscher's artistic development proceeded in a logical, linear fashion, but two portraits signed and dated in the same year pose a serious disruption to any such tidy progression (figs 12 and 13).<sup>31</sup> Although their basic design is compatible with portraits Netscher had painted in the years immediately preceding, the stilted figures and the dry manner of painting make them seem quite primitive by comparison. In fact, the unblended brushwork in these paintings is so unlike other accepted works from these years (even the comparatively quickly executed Craeyvanger portraits) that were it not for the characteristic and authentic signatures, it would be difficult to even consider them as autograph works by Netscher. Although questions and doubts remain, a responsible evaluation of Netscher's early career demands a reconsideration of their possible place in his oeuvre.

The small full-length *Portrait of a Man* in the Worcester Art Museum (fig. 12) is signed and dated 1659 at the base of the column at right.<sup>32</sup> The paint surface is rather worn and has suffered from past overcleaning, but it is nonetheless evident that apart from a few finely painted and well-preserved details (such as the man's shoes), the brushwork is dry and schematic, the figure flat, rickety and slightly skewed. Pentimenti (visible with the naked eye) indicate that the collar was originally drawn shorter and broader. Despite its insubstantial air, the figure stands imperiously in a grand palatial interior: the column at right, the swag of drapery and garden view at left, and the sculptural relief on the back wall presage the elegant settings that would become standard fare in Netscher's fashionable portraits of the 1670s and 1680s. For all its technical shortcomings, the portrait presents a fascinating tension between ability and ambition, as Netscher struggled to move beyond Ter Borch's conspicuously understated compositions towards something more decorative and demonstrably modern. This impetus would be more fully realized in paintings such as Netscher's *Portrait of a Man and Woman*, probably painted in about 1662; and the portraits of Pieter de Graeff and Jacoba Bicker painted in 1663.<sup>33</sup>

In the *Portrait of a Girl* (fig. 13) the paint is also applied in quick, distinct strokes, not smoothly and painstakingly blended.<sup>34</sup> There is little attempt to differentiate the textures of fabric and flesh, and details such as the decorative knots on the girl's sleeves, at her collar and in her hair are rendered as stiff, crackling bursts of colour rather than three-dimensional loops of fabric ribbon. While the lace trim on the collar in Netscher's *Portrait of a Woman*, painted in 1656 (fig. 4), is delicately rendered with a meticulous network of incised lines, the pattern here is suggested by quick dabs of textured paint. Although the manner of painting is not particularly sophisticated, the portrait nonetheless conveys the young girl's personality with vivacity and charm.

External evidence appears to support the attribution of the portrait to Netscher. On the back of the panel are fragments of two red wax seals (undecipherable) and an old paper label. Although little of the writing on the label is now legible, the layout of the text, the hand, and the few characters that are decipherable compare favourably with similar labels that in about 1803 the Arnhem *burgemeester* Johan Brantsen affixed to the backs of some 118 family portraits.<sup>35</sup> Recording existing inscriptions and known identifications to the best of his abilities, Brantsen compiled a detailed inventory of the family collection, which included five portraits by Netscher with dates ranging from 1651 [sic] to 1666. One of these is described as 'Elisabeth Brantsen, voor op staat *C. Netscher 1659*', and the sitter identified (incorrectly) as the daughter of Johan Brantsen and Nalida

Everwijn [sic].<sup>36</sup> From within the extended Brantsen family (including families related by marriage), more likely candidates for the portrait's subject might be Susanna Nalida (1650-1732) or Nalida (1652-1724) Everwijn, both daughters of Arnhem *burgemeester* Everhard Everwijn and Christina Kelffken.<sup>37</sup> In 1659, they would have been about nine and seven years old respectively, either of which might fit with the apparent age of the girl in Netscher's portrait. Christina Kelffken, moreover, was the sister of Johanna Kelffken, whom Ter Borch had portrayed along with her husband, Willem Everwijn, in 1653 (see above, and p. 15, fig. 13). Alternatively, Van Suchtelen and Potjer have proposed that the Munich portrait represents Wilhelmina Everwijn (1649-1737), daughter of Willem Everwijn and Johanna Kelffken (see above, p. 22, note 10). The Kelffken and Everwijn families were also related to the Craeyvangers; either association may have been the conduit for Netscher's having received the commission to portray another young family member.

Although the stylistic differences would seem to outweigh any similarities, it may be possible to reconcile these two curiously naive but authentically signed and dated paintings with the other, more accomplished paintings Netscher produced at the same time or slightly earlier. Examples of artists working simultaneously in different styles, for a variety of reasons, are relatively widespread.<sup>38</sup> Painters often modified their manner of painting according to the scale, intended placement or subject of the work, or (perhaps most frequently) in response to the more mundane issue of remuneration. Obviously, small, quickly executed works earned a painter money more easily than painstakingly finished ones – as Albrecht Dürer famously commented in a letter of 1509, 'In one year I can make a pile of common pictures, so that no one would believe it possible that one man could do them all. One can earn something with these. But assiduous, hair-splitting labour gives me little in return'.<sup>39</sup>

It is not known precisely when Netscher left Ter Borch's studio in Deventer, but it was probably about 1658 or 1659 at the latest. If, as a young painter starting out on his own, he was trying to make even small sums of money fairly quickly, he may not have had the luxury of expending unlimited time and effort on the execution of individual portrait commissions, but may have been knocking them out fairly rapidly for some ready cash. More painstakingly finished works such as the *Lady Washing her Hands* (fig. 10), *Chaff Cutter with Woman and Child* (signed and dated 1659; Philadelphia Museum of Art), *Presentation of a Medallion Portrait* (c. 1658/1659; Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum), or *The Toilet* (c. 1659; Basel, Kunstmuseum) may not have been painted for immediate sale, but for personal satisfaction and (perhaps) eventual sale on the open market – in which case, he could take as much time as he needed to perfect his work.<sup>40</sup>

In 1659 Netscher departed the Netherlands, intending to travel to Italy to complete his education with study of antique and modern masterpieces. He never got further than Bordeaux, however, and within a few months of his arrival there he had met and married Margareta Godijn, the daughter of an engineer and mathematician from Liège. By 1662 Netscher had returned to The Hague. We have no knowledge of Netscher's activities during the intervening years, and no works dated between 1660 and 1662 have come to light. But the paintings he made immediately after his return to the Netherlands – such as the exquisite *Lace Maker* in the Wallace Collection, dated 1662 and widely acknowledged as one of the finest paintings of his career<sup>41</sup> – indicate that Netscher must have worked assiduously during these years to perfect his technical skills and refine his unique artistic sensibility. He may well have continued to experiment with independent genre compositions while building a more reliably lucrative practice as a portrait painter. Nevertheless, with the secure identification of several works from Netscher's years as a young artist-in-training, we have come to a deeper understanding of the range of styles and genres he was working in, significantly narrowing the gaps remaining in our knowledge of his production prior to 1662.

NOTES

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- 1 M.E. Wieseman, *Caspar Netscher and Late Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting*, Doornspijk 2002, cats. 1-11, B1-B4.
  - 2 Much of what has been written on workshop practice in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century has been focused on paintings by and attributed to Rembrandt; see for example, M. Franken, "Aen stoelen en bancken leren gaen". Leerzame vormen van navolging in Rembrandts werkplaats, in: P. van den Brink and L.M. Helmus (eds.), *Album Discipulorum J.R.J. van Asperen de Boer*, Zwolle 1997, pp. 66-73; E. van de Wetering, "Principaelen" and Satellites: Pupils' Production in Rembrandt's Workshop, in: L.B. Rønberg and E. de la Fuente Pedersen *et al.*, exh. cat. *Rembrandt? The Master and his Workshop*, Copenhagen (Statens Museum for Kunst) 2006, pp. 106-122; and E. van de Wetering, 'Rembrandt's prototypes and pupils' production of variants', in: E. van de Wetering *et al.*, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings V: Small-scale History Paintings*, The Hague 2010, pp. 259-261. On the activities of Ter Borch's workshop, see S.J. Gudlaugsson, *Katalog der Gemälde Gerard ter Borchs sowie biographisches Material*, The Hague 1959-1960, vol. 1, pp. 119-121 (specifically on Netscher), and vol. 2, pp. 285-294 (on pupils and followers in general); and on diverse aspects of his working practice, see A. Wallert, 'The Miracle of Gerard ter Borch's Satin', in: A.K. Wheelock, Jr. *et al.*, exh. cat. *Gerard ter Borch*, Washington (National Gallery of Art) and Detroit (Detroit Institute of Arts) 2004-2005, pp. 31-41; A. Wallert, 'Ter Borch's Materials and Methods of painting: The Glass of Lemonade', *Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung* 18 (2004), no. 2, pp. 379-389; A. Wallert and G. Tauber, 'Over herhalingen in de schilderkunst: het probleem van reproductie', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 52 (2004), pp. 316-327; and E. van de Wetering, 'Gerard ter Borch en zijn atelier', *Kunstschrift* (2005) no. 3, pp. 16-27.
  - 3 For example: *Officer Dictating a Letter*, c. 1658/1659 (London, The National Gallery, inv. NG5847); *The Suitor's Visit*, c. 1658 (Washington, National Gallery of Art, inv. 58); and *Officer Writing a Letter, with a Trumpeter*, c. 1658/1659 (Philadelphia Museum of Art, inv. E 24-3-21). Gudlaugsson 1959-1960 (note 2), cats 141, 139 and 143 respectively. See Wieseman 2002 (note 1), p. 25, note 14.
  - 4 For details of Netscher's biography, see Wieseman 2002 (note 1), pp. 24-26, with further references.
  - 5 See Wieseman 2002 (note 1), p. 24; on Coster see also R. Ekkart, in: J.C. Bierens de Haan *et al.*, exh. cat. *Gelderse gezichten: Drie eeuwen portretkunst in Gelderland*, Nijmegen (Museum Het Valkenhof) 2002, pp. 60-63, and the article by Van Suchtelen and Potjer in this issue, pp. 7-24.
  - 6 See R. de Jager, 'Meester, leerjongen, leertijd. Een analyse van zeventiende-eeuwse Noord-Nederlandse leerlingcontracten van kunstschilders, goud- en zilversmeden', *Oud Holland* 104 (1990), pp. 69-111, esp. pp. 72-73.
  - 7 On various aspects of workshop practice and the structuring of painters' apprenticeships in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century, see *inter alia*: A. Tummers, "By His Hand": The Paradox of Seventeenth-Century Connoisseurship, in: A. Tummers and K. Jonckheere (eds.), *Art Market and Connoisseurship: A Closer Look at Paintings by Rembrandt, Rubens and their Contemporaries*, Amsterdam 2008, pp. 40-41; De Jager 1990 (note 6), esp. pp. 93-98; A.K. Wheelock, Jr., *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century. The Collections of the National Gallery of Art Systematic Catalogue*, New York and Oxford 1995, pp. 205-210; M. Goossens, *Schilders en de markt. Haarlem 1605-1635*, Leiden 2001, pp. 69-81; W. Liedtke, 'Rembrandt's "Workshop" revisited', *Oud Holland* 117 (2004), pp. 48-73; and J. van der Veen, 'By His Own Hand: The Valuation of Autograph Paintings in the Seventeenth Century', in: E. van de Wetering *et al.*, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, Dordrecht 2005, vol. 4, pp. 1-41.
  - 8 De Jager 1990 (note 6), on which the following summary is largely based.
  - 9 In Haarlem, for example, guild regulations required at least three years as a pupil ('*leerling*' or '*discipul*') followed by at least one year as a paid assistant or journeyman ('*werckgezel*' or '*vrije gast*') in order to become a master painter; see Tummers 2008 (note 7), p. 41, citing C.J. Gonnet, 'Sint Lucas Gilde te Haarlem in 1631', in: Fr.D.O. Obreen (ed.), *Archief voor Nederlandsche Kunstgeschiedenis*, Rotterdam 1877-1878, vol. 1, pp. 239-240 and 243-244.
  - 10 Tummers 2008 (note 7), pp. 74-75.
  - 11 See Wieseman 2002 (note 1), pp. 111-117, and M.E. Wieseman, 'Paper Trails: Drawings in the Work of Caspar Netscher and his Studio', in: V. Manuth and A. Rüger (eds.), *Collected Opinions: Essays on Netherlandish Art in Honour of Alfred Bader*, London 2004, pp. 248-261. On drawings and their importance in the Ter Borch studio, A.M. Kettering, *Drawings from the Ter Borch Studio Estate (Catalogus van de Nederlandse Tekeningen in het Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)*, 2 vols, The Hague 1988.
  - 12 See A.K. Wheelock, Jr., in: exh. cat. *Gerard ter Borch*, Washington (National Gallery of Art) and Detroit (Detroit Institute of Arts) 2004-2005, p. 13.
  - 13 See Wallert and Tauber 2004 (note 2).
  - 14 Gudlaugsson 1959-1960 (note 2), vol. 2, cat. nos. 4.b (Wieseman 2002 [note 1], cat. B 1), 72.c, 110. II.a (Wieseman 2002, cat. 1), 110. II.h, 110.II.n, 113.k, 113.r, 121.a (Wieseman 2002, cat. 5), 121.b, 121.c, 121.d, 122.a, 125.b, 125.c, 126.b, 128.c, 139.a, 140.b, 141.b, 142.f, 146.a and 164.a (Wieseman 2002, cat. C 22).
  - 15 Goossens 2001 (note 7), pp. 89-90, cites works by the Haarlem painters Pieter de Grebber and Judith Leyster.
  - 16 Wieseman 2002 (note 1), cat. 1.
  - 17 Wieseman 2002 (note 1), cats 2 (*Portrait of a Man*) and 3 (*Portrait of a Woman*). The three portraits by Netscher of 1656 were restored in 2010 by Ingeborg de Jongh and Milko den Leeuw, The Hague.
  - 18 In this incarnation, the figure's pose would have been virtually identical to that of the *Portrait of Engel Craeyvanger* (see p. 10, fig. 6).

- 19 On Ter Borch's painting methods, see Wallert 2004 (note 2), esp. pp. 384-385.
- 20 Wheelock 1995 (note 7), p. 207. Admittedly the example Wheelock cites in partial support of his point – Rembrandt's *Belshazzar's Feast* in the National Gallery, London – shows no physical evidence of this process; D. Bomford *et al.*, *Art in the Making: Rembrandt*, London 2006 (rev. edn.), pp. 116-117. See also Liedtke 2004 (note 7), p. 57; and Tummers 2008 (note 7), pp. 40-41.
- 21 The only other life-sized portrait Netscher made (not of a family member) is the *Portrait of a Protestant Clergyman*, signed and dated 1662 (oil on canvas, 83 x 67 cm, Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv. 1588); Wieseman 2002 (note 1), cat. 19.
- 22 With thanks to Milko den Leeuw for this observation.
- 23 Wieseman 2002 (note 1), cat. 5, signed: *GTB* (in monogram) and *CNetscher* (C and N in monogram). In examination with the naked eye (2005) the signatures appeared authentic but were not subjected to further testing or examination under the microscope.
- 24 While it may have been fairly routine for a master painter to sign paintings made wholly or in part by assistants as a way of endorsing them as workshop productions, I am not aware of other paintings jointly signed by both master and pupil. Eddy Schavemaker has convincingly identified a number of paintings seemingly painted jointly by Eglon van der Neer and Adriaen van der Werff, but none are signed by both artists (E. Schavemaker, *Eglon van der Neer (1635/36 – 1703): His Life and His Work*, Doornspijk 2010, pp. 67-76 and cats 47, 59.1, 81, 82, 96 and Appendix IV, cats 3, 16, 17, 19 and 44. The dealer R. Langton Douglas, who handled the picture in the 1930s, was of the opinion that: 'The figure of the trumpeter, as distinguished experts have remarked, is by Ter Borch. The figure of the woman seems to be by a different hand. It is probable that the picture was designed, and painted in some part, by Ter Borch, and that Netscher, who was then working in his studio, finished it' (report dated 1935, Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie, The Hague).
- 25 It is not certain that all of these changes are Netscher's invention, however, as another version of the modified composition exists (oil on canvas, 78.1 x 76.2 cm, private collection, New York) that appears to be slightly closer to Ter Borch's hand; see Wieseman 2002 (note 1), cat. 5a. It is proportionally larger and more square in format; the figures are less attenuated, similar to the Taft Museum painting. The floor is plain, rather than wood-planked, and there are other small differences in details throughout.
- 26 Wieseman 2002 (note 1), cat. 6.
- 27 Philadelphia Museum of Art conservation examination report compiled by Claire Chorley and Mark Tucker, 2 October 1995. The painting was already sold as a work by Ter Borch in 1736; see Wieseman 2002 (note 1), p. 170.
- 28 See P. van der Ploeg *et al.*, *Dutch and Flemish Old Masters from the Kremer Collection*, Bruges 2002, pp. 120-123; and Wieseman 2002 (note 1), cat. 4. On the painting by Ter Borch that served as Netscher's model, see Gudlaugsson 1959-1960 (note 2), cat. 113.
- 29 The date was tentatively read as '1657' in Wieseman 2002 (note 1) and Van der Ploeg 2002 (note 28).
- 30 Wieseman 2002 (note 1), cats 8 and 7, respectively.
- 31 Wieseman 2002 (note 1), cats B4.a and C420, respectively.
- 32 Wieseman 2002 (note 1), cat. B4.a. Although previously judged to be a copy, the Worcester painting now appears to be the primary version. The initial letters of the signature have been strengthened, but the signature itself gives every indication of being authentic; Rita Albertson, Chief Conservator at the Worcester Art Museum, observed that '...the paint of the signature is well integrated into the layers of surrounding original paint' (report dated 6 October 2010).
- 33 Wieseman 2002 (note 1), cats 18, 20 and 21, respectively.
- 34 Wieseman 2002 (note 1), cat. C420, possibly also identical to cat. D153.
- 35 On the family portraits catalogued by Johan Brantsen (1768-1826), see J.C. Bierens de Haan and J.R. Ras, 'De rol van het portret in het interieur', in: J.C. Bierens de Haan *et al.*, exh. cat. *Gelderse gezichten: Drie eeuwen portretkunst in Gelderland*, Nijmegen (Museum Het Valkenhof) 2002, pp. 50-53.
- 36 *Lijst van de Familie Portraits aan het huis van oom de Staatsraad in de Bakkerstraat, opgemaakt in December 1803*, no. 5 (Arnhem, Gelders Archief, Familie archief Brantsen, no. 9, 1803). The third digit of the date was originally written as a '6', then corrected to a '5'. The only Elisabeth Brantsen in the family was the daughter of Johan Brantsen and Beatrix Kelffken (not Nalida Everwijn), born in 1668 and thus too young to have been the subject of this portrait.
- 37 See J. Anspach, *De Veluwsche familie Tulleken en hare aanverwanten*, 1881, pp. 170-172.
- 38 For an overview of this phenomenon, see A. Tummers, *The Fingerprint of an Old Master, On Connoisseurship of Seventeenth-Century Dutch and Flemish Paintings: Recent Debates and Seventeenth-Century Insights*, Amsterdam 2009, pp. 140-161. Adriaan Waiboer's recent studies on Gabriel Metsu explore that artist's competitive use of multiple painting styles during the course of his career; see A. Waiboer *et al.*, exh. cat. *Gabriel Metsu*, Dublin (National Gallery of Ireland), Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum) and Washington, D.C. (National Gallery of Art) 2010-2011.
- 39 'Den gmaine gmäll will ich ain jahr ain hauffen machen, das niemand glaubte, das möglich were, das ain thun möchte. An solchen mag man etwas gewinnen. Aber das fleisig kleiben gehet nit von staten.' Cited and translated in J. L. Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*, Chicago and London 1993, pp. 206-207; as cited by Tummers 2009 (note 38), p. 141.
- 40 Wieseman 2002 (note 1), cats 4, 11, 8 and 7 respectively.