



Rommel Pot Player

Jacob Toorenvliet
(Leiden 1640 – 1719 Leiden)

1679
oil on copper
17.8 x 13.8 cm
JT-101

How to cite

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Wearing a wide-brimmed hat and tattered clothing with visible patchwork, an old man sings and plays a rommel pot. He turns his head toward the left, in the direction of the light source, as if addressing someone outside the pictorial space. Light illuminates his wrinkled face and gray beard, while subtle shadows along his left shoulder and the brim of his hat silhouette his form against an undefined background. Jacob Toorenvliet painted this lifelike depiction of an old musician in 1679, the year in which he returned to his native Leiden after a long stay in Vienna.^[1] Whether he painted this small copper panel in Leiden or Vienna, the painting is thematically, compositionally and technically reminiscent of his works from the late 1670s.^[2] For example, in 1678 he had used a similar bearded model in two comparable half-length depictions of a hurdy-gurdy player.^[3]

The rommel pot was a crude musical instrument made of an earthenware jar covered with a pig's bladder. The stick that punctures the bladder agitates the air inside, producing sounds that mimic the low grunting of a pig. Though this handmade instrument could be played throughout the year, rommel pot playing was particularly associated with the energetic celebration of Shrove Tuesday (*Vastenavond*), when children went from door to door singing and dancing in exchange for money or sweets.^[4] In seventeenth-century paintings and prints of such joyful festivities, the rommel pot player was often accompanied by children or other street musicians. He was often depicted with the attributes of a fool, recalling the folly of Carnival itself, which concludes on Shrove Tuesday. In *The*

Comparative Figures



Fig 1. Frans Hals, *Rommel Pot Player*, ca. 1618–22, oil on canvas, 106 x 80.3 cm, Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas, ACF 1951.01

Rommel Pot Player (**fig 1**), attributed to Frans Hals (1582/83–1666), for example, the player, surrounded by a crowd of children, wears a hat with a foxtail, a traditional attribute of the fool.^[5] A print by Jan van de Velde shows a rommel pot player with a similar hat, and it bears an inscription that reveals his role: “At Shrovetide, many fools walk about / For farthings [they] grunt on a rommel pot.”^[6]

The figure in this picture is depicted neither as a fool nor accompanied by festive children, and thus it is unlikely that Toorenvliet conceived his work within this well-established iconographic tradition. Other traditions, however, did exist for depictions of rommel pot players, and Toorenvliet’s painting may belong to one of those. For example, a print by J. Dubois after J. Matham (**fig 2**), which depicts a half-length old man playing a rommel pot, makes it quite clear that this musician’s motivation for playing was financial gain: coins lie on the table before him and the inscription on the print reads “I play a fool for the profit from this pot.”^[7] However, as no coins are seen in Toorenvliet’s painting, it is unlikely that he conceived his work in the same vein. More probable is that this copper panel formed part of a now lost series of the five senses, with this work depicting the sense of hearing. Toorenvliet did, in fact, paint such a series in the late 1670s, in which he depicted the sense of hearing as a man singing and playing the lute.^[8] The rommel pot would also have been an appropriate attribute for the sense of hearing, perhaps for a group of lower-class personifications of the senses. Whether as an individual painting or part of a series, Toorenvliet’s lively depiction of a rommel pot player still has the power to make the spectator vividly recall the ear-splitting sounds of this folksy instrument.

- Junko Aono
2017



Fig 2. J. Dubois after J. Matham, *Rommel-Pot Player*, engraving, 24.7 x 19 cm, Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-BI-1959

Endnotes

1. For biographic information on Toorenvliet's life, see Piet Bakker's biography of the artist in this catalogue.
2. In particular, the depiction of a man in half-length close to the picture plane, the refined rendering of light and texture, and the brownish palette with grey tones enlivened by white and red accents echo his paintings from earlier in the decade.
3. Susanne H. Karau, *Leben und Werk des Leidener Malers Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719)* (Ph.D. diss., Universität Berlin, 2002), no. A89, A90; Annegret Laabs, *De Leidse Fijnschilders uit Dresden* (Exh. cat. Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden; Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal) (Zwolle, 2001), 123–25.
4. Seymour Slive, *Frans Hals* (Exh. cat. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art; Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum) (London and Munich, 1989), 148–51; James A. Welu and Pieter Biesboer, eds., *Judith Leyster: A Dutch Master and Her World* (Exh. cat. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum; Worcester, Worcester Art Museum) (Zwolle, 1993), 358–60; and Karel Moens and Iris Kockelbergh, *Muziek & Grafiek: Burgermoraal en muziek in de 16de- en 17de-eeuwse Nederlanden* (Exh. cat. Antwerp, Hessenhuis) (Antwerp, 1994), 125, 130–31, figs. 87c, 88.
5. Seymour Slive, *Frans Hals* (London, 1974), no. L3-1; idem, ed., *Frans Hals* (Exh. cat. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art; Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum) (London and Munich, 1989), no. 8.
6. “Op Vasten-avond Loopt menich Sotje / Om duytjes gnorren op 't Rommel-potje.” F. W. H. Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, ca. 1450–1700* (Roosendaal, 1989), 33, 34, no. 132. See also Seymour Slive, *Frans Hals* (Exh. cat. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art; Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum) (London and Munich, 1989), 150–51, fig. 8c; James A. Welu and Pieter Biesboer, eds., *Judith Leyster: A Dutch Master and Her World* (Exh. cat. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum; Worcester, Worcester Art Museum) (Zwolle, 1993), 358–59. The pictorial tradition of rommel pot players such as these must have been familiar to Toorenvliet, as the 1692 inventory of the collection amassed by his father Abraham Toorenvliet included a painting by Dirck Druyf described as “one [picture of a] Shrove Tuesday fool.” For the inventory of Abraham, see Bakker's biography on Toorenvliet in this catalogue.
7. “K' speel voor Sot, om 't genot van dees Pot.” F. W. H. Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, ca. 1450–1700* (Roosendaal, 1989), 6:6, no. 2; James A. Welu and Pieter Biesboer, eds., *Judith Leyster: A Dutch Master and Her World*

(Exh. cat. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum; Worcester, Worcester Art Museum) (Zwolle, 1993), 358, 360, fig. 40d.

8. Susanne H. Karau, *Leben und Werk des Leidener Malers Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719)* (Ph.D. diss., Universität Berlin, 2002), nos. A70–72, B116–120.

Provenance

- Possibly collection of Mrs Stanley, Tavistock.
- (Sale, Bonhams, London, 20 April 2005, no. 1; [Johnny van Haeften, Ltd., London, 2005]).
- From whom acquired by the present owner.

Technical Summary

The support, a rectangular sheet of copper with minor undulations, has substantial weight and does not flex when handled.^[1] All four sides of the support bow outward toward the midpoints, and the corner angles are greater than 90 degrees. There are two layers of oxidation products, a continuous brown layer and mottled black spots. A rectangular patch of adhesive residue suggests the location of a previous label, and a numerical inscription is visible under infrared, but there are no wax collection seals, stencils or maker's marks.

A light gray ground has been thinly and evenly applied predominantly with long vertical strokes. The paint has been extremely smoothly applied with delicate modeling and small flecks of white highlights along the figure's proper right cuff and sleeve.

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

No underdrawing is readily apparent in infrared images captured at 780–1000 nanometers. A few compositional changes visible in the images and as pentimenti include a modification to the figure's gaze. In the images, the figure's proper right pupil and iris appear rounder and more similar to those of his left eye and his gaze appears more symmetrical. The figure's proper left ear was added during the paint stage and the top of his hat has been widened along the left to create a more square, flat top.

The painting was cleaned and restored in 2005 and remains in a good state of preservation.

Technical Summary Endnotes



1. According to Isabel Horovitz, *Copper as Canvas* (Exh. cat. Phoenix Art Museum) (Phoenix, 1999), 67-68, “a highly worked sheet of copper will be less flexible than one that is not highly worked, and this is why quite thin (0.5 mm) sheets of copper can provide such excellent rigid supports for paint films.”



Doctor's Visit

Jacob Toorenvliet
(Leiden 1640 – 1719 Leiden)

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

How to cite

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

Comparative Figures



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

1666 or 1667, as two of his other doctor's visit scenes are dated 1666.^[3]

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

Painters of this theme adopted a more suggestive and subtle manner than the aforementioned illustrators to narrate the story of lovesickness. A good example is Steen's *Doctor's Visit*, ca. 1661–62 (**fig 2**).^[7] In Steen's picture, the doctor glances knowingly to the maid holding a bottle of urine, an indication that he has come to a diagnosis that lovesickness is the cause of her illness. In case there should be any doubt on the part of the viewer, Steen included other motifs to reinforce the point: a modern-day Cupid in the guise of a boy holding a bow and arrow and a painting on the wall in the background representing Venus and Adonis, an allusion to the tragic end of that love. Although Toorenvliet did not include such supporting motifs, the meaningful glances exchanged by the mistress and the maid suggest that they are already fully aware of the cause of her illness.

The popularity of the doctor's visit theme in Leiden was partially due to the academic environment stimulated by its prominent university. Scholarly interest in medical science was reflected in the large number of dissertations and publications in this field, and scholars and doctors appreciated paintings with pseudo-medical subjects.^[8] Dou, who was Toorenvliet's uncle by marriage, created the prototype of the doctor inspecting urine in his *Doctor's Visit*, 1653 (**fig 3**).^[9] In his painting the doctor holds up a flask in order to get a better look at the fluid, while the



Fig 2. Jan Steen, *Doctor's Visit*, ca. 1661–62, oil on panel, 60.5 x 48.5 cm, Mauritshuis, The Hague, inv. 168



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



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



elderly maidservant, who brought the sample of her mistress's urine, awaits his diagnosis. The physician's pose, in reverse, is remarkably similar to that of Toorenvliet's doctor, which suggests that Toorenvliet was aware of Dou's prototype. At the same time, he must have known and responded to Van Mieris's *Doctor's Visit*, 1657 (**fig 4**).^[10] Toorenvliet clearly based his composition and individual motifs on this picture, among them the diagonally placed canopy bed and the carpet covered table. Notably, Van Mieris depicted the doctor taking the patient's pulse rather than examining her urine, as Dou had done. As though doubting whether either one of these examination techniques was foolproof, Toorenvliet represents his doctor simultaneously examining the woman's urine and taking her pulse, thereby joining together the narrative approaches of his predecessors.^[11]

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

- Junko Aono
2017

Endnotes

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



Kloek, and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Jan Steen: Painter and Storyteller*, ed. Guido Jansen (Exh. cat. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (Zwolle, 1996), 150–53, no. 16; and Mariët Westermann, *The Amusements of Jan Steen: Comic Painting in the Seventeenth Century* (Zwolle, 1997), 99–106.

8. The production of theatrical plays that narrated the story of lovesickness could also have contributed to the popularity of this theme in the art of painting. Einer Pettersen, “‘Amans Amanti Medicus’: Die Iconologie des Motivs ‘Der artzliche Besuch,’” in *Hollandische Genremalerei im 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Henning Bock and Thomas W. Gaehtgens, *Jahrbuch Preussischer Kulturbesitz* 4 (Berlin, 1987), 212–14; and Mariët Westermann, *The Amusements of Jan Steen: Comic Painting in the Seventeenth Century* (Zwolle, 1997), 99–105.
9. Ronni Baer, “The Paintings of Gerrit Dou (1613–1675),” 3 vols. (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1990), cat. no. 62; and Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, Wolfgang Prohaska, Karl Schütz, and Martina Haja, *Die Gemäldegalerie des Kunsthistorischen Museums in Wien: Verzeichnis der Gemälde* (Vienna, 1991), 50.
10. Otto Naumann, *Frans van Mieris (1635–1681) the Elder* (Doornspijk, 1981), 2:22–24, no. 20; Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, Wolfgang Prohaska, Karl Schütz, and Martina Haja, *Die Gemäldegalerie des Kunsthistorischen Museums in Wien: Verzeichnis der Gemälde* (Vienna, 1991), 84; and Quentin Buvelot, ed., *Frans van Mieris 1635–1681* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis; Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art) (Zwolle, 2005), 107–10, no. 13.
11. Toorenvliet first depicted this type of doctor in a picture dated 1663, which is probably the first instance when an artist depicted a doctor undertaking these dual examinations. See Susanne H. Karau, *Leben und Werk des Leidener Malers Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719)* (Ph.D. diss., Universität Berlin, 2002), cat. nos. A13 and D19. Caspar Netscher and Jan Steen also depicted the same multitasking doctor, but their pictures were made slightly later than Toorenvliet’s: Marjorie E. Wieseman, *Caspar Netscher and Late Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting* (Doornspijk, 2002), 181–82, no. 24. For Jan Steen, see note 7.
12. It is possible that the two pictures of doctors by Dou and Van Mieris mentioned above (figs. 3 and 4), now in the collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, were part of the imperial collection in the Viennese court during the 1660s. They were, however, not mentioned in the Archduke’s inventory of 1659–60, and it is unknown how they would have been purchased and incorporated into the collection. Ronni Baer, “The Paintings of Gerrit Dou (1613–1675),” 3 vols. (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1990), 102; eadem, *Gerrit Dou 1613–1675* (Exh. cat. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art; London, Dulwich Picture Gallery; The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague and Washington D.C., 2000), 31; and Otto Naumann, *Frans van Mieris (1635–1681) the Elder* (Doornspijk, 1981), 1:24. Furthermore, in the year 1660, pictures by Dou and Van Mieris had entered the collections



of different European royals, which established their international reputations: Dou's painting *The Young Mother* (1658, Mauritshuis, The Hague) was sent to Charles II of England as part of the "Dutch gift," and Van Mieris's painting *The Cloth Shop* (1660, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) was acquired by Archduke Leopold in Vienna for an exorbitantly high price, probably at least 1,000 guilders.

Provenance

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

Exhibition History

- Oxford, Ashmolean Museum of Art, on loan with the permanent collection, January 2011–August 2015 [lent by the present owner].
- Beijing, National Museum of China, "Rembrandt and His Time: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection," 17 June–3 September 2017 [lent by the present owner].
- Shanghai, Long Museum, West Bund, "Rembrandt, Vermeer and Hals in the Dutch Golden Age: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection," 23 September 2017–25 February 2018 [lent by the present owner].

References

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

Technical Summary

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

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

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

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

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

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

Technical Summary Endnotes

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



Allegory of Painting

Jacob Toorenvliet
(Leiden 1640 – 1719 Leiden)

ca. 1675–79

oil on copper

24.6 x 31 cm

possible traces of signature, bottom left

JT-106

How to cite

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A recurrent theme in Jacob Toorenvliet's oeuvre is that of common people engaged in everyday activities, but on at least six occasions he painted abstract allegories, one of the finest of these being *Allegory of Painting*.^[1] Although seemingly situated within an ordinary Dutch interior complete with a table covered with a colorful carpet, bookshelf, hanging curtain, and an inquisitive dog, numerous pictorial elements in this work have symbolic associations that distinguish it from Toorenvliet's genre pictures. The objects near the woman in the light blue dress, including a palette with brushes, a mahlstick, and a painting on an easel in the background, indicate that she is an allegorical figure personifying the art of painting. As she points to the open book she holds with her left hand, she turns her head toward the old man in a mantle who is about to crown her with a laurel wreath. He wears a similar wreath and rests his hand on a celestial globe, as if trying to draw the viewer's attention to it.

The identity of the bearded old man is made clear through a comparison of this painting with Toorenvliet's *Allegory of Painting Inspired by Poetry*.^[2] In this latter work, a bearded man similarly adorns a female personification of painting with a wreath of laurel, but here he not only wears a laurel branch but also a label identifying him as *Poesia* (Poetry). The message is clear: poetry inspires the art of painting, a conceit that had its origins in Horace's dictum that poetry and painting should be considered as sister arts (*ut pictura poesis*).^[3] The relationship of painting to poetry was articulated as "Poetry in painting keeps silent, while painting in poetry speaks" in the text describing the allegorical concept of Painting in Cesare Ripa's popular *Iconologia*, an emblem book with which Toorenvliet was well acquainted.^[4] The celestial globe on which the old man rests his hand is also an appropriate attribute for an allegorical figure of Poetry. In his discussion of the concept, Ripa describes Poetry as wearing a laurel wreath, since the origin of verse is in Heaven.^[5] Furthermore, the book to which the woman points signifies that the art of painting should be based on literary tradition, thereby proclaiming the absolute superiority of the category of history painting.

Toorenvliet probably executed this skillfully finished painting in Vienna around 1675–79, where he lived and worked from the late 1660s until 1679. He produced most of his copper paintings during that period of his career.^[6] In Vienna, moreover, Toorenvliet further developed his ability to distinguish between a wide variety of materials and textures, evident here

Comparative Figures



Fig 1. Detail of plaster cast of *Bacchanal with Children and a Goat* in Jacob Toorenvliet, *Allegory of Painting* (JT-106)



Fig 2. Detail of sketchbook in Jacob Toorenvliet, *Allegory of Painting* (JT-106)

in the smooth surface of the plaster, the soft fluff of the carpet, the sharp highlight on the brown skull, and the slightly creased pages of the old sketchbook. At the same time, he became interested in rendering complex allegorical subjects. Here, for example, he purposely juxtaposed a skull with a plaster cast of a classical female head, thereby contrasting the symbol of the transience of human existence with the ideal of timeless beauty, a fundamental concern for the art of painting. The small, brown sculpture of a male figure behind the plaster head is most likely an example of an *écorché*, a model of the body with its skin removed and outer muscles displayed. Such models were important for the study of human anatomy, which was of vital interest for artists working within the classical tradition.^[7]

The relief behind these objects is a partial plaster cast of *Bacchanal with Children and a Goat* (**fig 1**), one of the most famous works by the illustrious seventeenth-century classicizing Flemish sculptor, François Duquesnoy (1597–1643).^[8] Duquesnoy's contemporaries so esteemed his sculptural works that they described them as rivaling those of the ancient masters.^[9] Plaster casts of his sculptures were made for artists to study alongside casts of classical sculpture, as can be seen in a painting by Michiel Sweerts (1618–64), *Painter's Studio with a Model*.^[10] *Bacchanal with Children and a Goat* was well known to Dutch painters, and Gerrit Dou (1613–75), Toorenvliet's uncle-in-law, often incorporated an image of this relief sculpture into his paintings.^[11] One reason Dou chose to include this relief in his work was to display his ability to simulate different materials and objects, including stone sculpture, but another was undoubtedly the allegorical message about the power of illusionism that it conveyed. In this relief, the realistic appearance of the mask held by a putto at the left so fooled a goat that he had to be restrained by a host of putti from charging it. It is thus fully understandable that Toorenvliet, who so emulated Dou, inserted this relief into his picture.^[12] Remarkably, however, Toorenvliet omitted the left portion of Duquesnoy's relief that included the image of the putto holding a mask to "deceive" a goat. One explanation for this omission is that Toorenvliet sought to extend Duquesnoy's allegory into the broader pictorial image. The goat now appears to rush toward the woman, who, having the ability to create compellingly illusionistic images, both literally and symbolically takes the putto's place.

The open sketchbook, which practically slides off the table, is the last piece of the pictorial puzzle in Toorenvliet's intriguing allegory. On the right page



are several sketches of human eyes and ears (**fig 2**). Such sketches of individual body parts had their origin in Italian drawing books of the sixteenth century, and were important in studio practice as well as in art theory.^[13] This kind of drawing book could also be found in northern Europe, for example Abraham Bloemaert's (1566–1651) famous sketchbook, engraved and published by Frederik Bloemaert in installments beginning around 1650.^[14] Toorenvliet's depiction of the sketchbook shows his interest in the art of *disegno* as important for comprehending both human anatomy and ideal proportions of the human body.

Toorenvliet left Vienna and returned to the Netherlands around 1679, subsequently moving around 1686 from Amsterdam to his native Leiden, where he helped to establish a drawing academy.^[15] Toorenvliet, an esteemed artist of international experience, founded this academy for “fine painters” with the younger artists Carel de Moor (1655–1738) and Willem van Mieris (1662–1747). Toorenvliet's great emphasis on drawing as the practical and theoretical foundation of painting must have been stimulated by the growing taste for classicism during this period, partially inspired by Gerard de Lairesse's guiding principles. De Lairesse's *Groot schilderboek* (1707) recommended that painters use books and plaster casts of ancient sculpture to learn the general principles of classical beauty and the perfect proportions of the human body. *Allegory of Painting*, which Toorenvliet probably painted before he returned to his native country, can be considered a prelude to the role this important painter and draughtsman had in founding this new drawing academy.

- Junko Aono
2017

Endnotes

1. Susanne Henriette Karau, *Leben und Werk des Leidener Malers Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719)* (Ph.D. diss., Universität Berlin, 2002), 134, nos. A56 and 57 (as a pendant), 91, B12, 13, 14, 15.
2. Jacob Toorenvliet, *An Allegory of Painting Inspired by Poetry*, ca. 1680, oil on panel, 39 x 29 cm, present location unknown. Susanne Henriette Karau, *Leben und Werk des Leidener Malers Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719)* (Ph.D. diss., Universität Berlin, 2002), 147–48, no. B14.
3. Horace, *Ars Poetica*, v. 361. *Ut pictura poesis* (poetry is like painting) is considered a key concept in Renaissance artistic theory, though the inverse form of “painting is like poetry,” is more often encountered in the humanistic tradition. For seventeenth-century Dutch painting, this concept offers the important theoretical foundation for the iconographic interpretation of didactic meaning of the visible world. See Eddy de Jongh, *Tot Lering en Vermaak: Betekenissen van Hollandse genrevoorstellingen in de zeventiende eeuw* (Exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (Amsterdam, 1976), 20–26.
4. Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia of Uytbeeldinghe des Verstands* (Amsterdam, 1644; reprint, Soest, 1971), 452–53. Toorenvliet’s familiarity with Ripa’s *Iconologia* is confirmed by his *Allegory of Rhetoric*, in which a figure holds a copy of the volume. See Susanne Henriette Karau, *Leben und Werk des Leidener Malers Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719)* (Ph.D. diss., Universität Berlin, 2002), B12.
5. Appropriately, Ripa’s Poetry wears a blue dress embroidered with stars. Ripa’s personification of Poetry is a woman, which Toorenvliet changed into an old man, a figure that is often found in his paintings from around 1675 to 1679. Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia of Uytbeeldinghe des Verstands* (Amsterdam, 1644; reprint, Soest, 1971), 88–89; and Susanne Henriette Karau, *Leben und Werk des Leidener Malers Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719)* (Ph.D. diss., Universität Berlin, 2002), 148.
6. I am grateful to Susanne Karau for updated information on the possible dating of this picture. For newly confirmed information about Toorenvliet’s stay in foreign countries, see Piet Bakker’s biography in this catalogue.
7. Charles Avery and Anthony Radcliffe, *Giambologna 1529–1608: Sculptor to the Medici* (Exh. cat. Edinburgh, Royal Scottish Museum; London, Victoria & Albert Museum; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum) (London, 1978), 198–99, no. 192; Laura Olmstead Tonelli, “Academic Practice in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in *Children of Mercury: The Education of Artists in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Laurie Rubin (Exh. cat. Providence, R.I., Brown University and the Museum of Art) (Providence, R.I.,

1984), 104–6, figs. 77, 80. Examples of *écorché* have survived in a variety of materials, like plaster, bronze, wax, terra cotta, ivory, and wood.

8. François Duquesnoy, *Bacchanal with Children and a Goat*, marble, 62.5 x 87.5 cm, Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome. See Marion Boudon-Machuel, *François du Quesnoy 1597–1643* (Paris, 2005), no. 64b.
9. Michael Sweerts, *Painter's Studio with a Model*, oil on canvas, 82 x 106 cm, Fondation Rau pour le Tiers-Monde, Zürich. See Peter Hecht, "Art Beats Nature, and Painting Does So Best of All: The Paragone Competition in Duquesnoy, Dou and Schalcken," *Simiolus* 29 (2002): 192–93; Marion Boudon-Machuel, *François du Quesnoy 1597–1643* (Paris, 2005), 45–47, 175–86. Duquesnoy arrived in Rome in 1618 and became one of the key figures of classicism in that city, together with the French painter Nicolas Poussin, who moved to Rome in 1624.
10. Rolf Kultzen, *Michael Sweerts: Brussels 1618–Goa 1664* (Doornspijk, 1996), no. 1. The presence of Duquesnoy's popular relief in this picture may even reflect actual studio practice that Toorenvliet encountered during his visit to Italy in the 1660s.
11. In their paintings, Dou and his followers used the relief to decorate the lower wall of a stone window, which framed a genre scene. Marion Boudon-Machuel, *François du Quesnoy 1597–1643* (Paris, 2005), 53–55, 204–7.
12. By depicting the relief, Dou probably intended to demonstrate the superiority of the art of painting over that of sculpture, a traditional theme of the *Paragone*. Ronni Baer, "The Paintings of Gerrit Dou (1613–1675)," 3 vols. (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1990), for instance, no. 63. Eric Jan Sluijter, ed., *Leidse Fijnschilders: Van Gerrit Dou tot Frans van Mieris de Jonge, 1630–1760* (Exh. cat., Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal) (Zwolle, 1988), 101–3; Peter Hecht, "Art Beats Nature, and Painting Does So Best of All: The Paragone Competition in Duquesnoy, Dou and Schalcken," *Simiolus* 29 (2002): 194–97; Annegret Laabs, ed., *De Leidse Fijnschilders uit Dresden* (Exh. cat. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal) (Zwolle, 2001), 41; Marion Boudon-Machuel, *François du Quesnoy 1597–1643* (Paris, 2005), 205–6.
13. Chittima Amornpichetkul, "Seventeenth-Century Italian Drawing Books: Their Origin and Development," in *Children of Mercury: The Education of Artists in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Laurie Rubin (Exh. cat. Providence, R.I., Brown University and the Museum of Art) (Providence, R.I., 1984), 110–12. A famous example is *Il vero modo et ordine per dissegnar tutte le partie et membra del corpo humano* (1608) by Odoardo Fialetti. Johannes Gellee's *Tyrocinia artis pictoriae caelatoriae ac sculptoriae* is one example of the northern copies executed after early seventeenth-century academic drawing books from Italy (mainly that of Fialetti), which were published by Claes Jansz. Visscher in Amsterdam. See Jaap Bolton, *Method and Practice: Dutch and Flemish Drawing Books, 1600–1750* (Landau, 1985), 132–35.



14. Jaap Bolton, *Abraham Bloemaert c. 1565–1651: The Drawings*, 2 vols. (2007), 1:366, no. 1152; 2:391.
15. Rudi Ekkart, “Van Willem van Mieris tot Cornet,” in *Leids Kunstlegaat: Kunst en historie rondom Ars Aemula Natura*, ed. R. E. O. Ekkart (Leiden, 1974), 7–14; and Eric Jan Sluijter, ed., *Leidse Fijnschilders: Van Gerrit Dou tot Frans van Mieris de Jonge, 1630–1760* (Exh. cat. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal) (Zwolle, 1988), 33.

Provenance

- Private collection, Europe (sale, Sotheby’s, London, 4 December 1997, no. 135 [Bernheimer Fine Old Masters, Munich, 1998–2002; Bernheimer-Colnaghi, London, 2002–5; Jack Kilgore, New York, 2002–3]).
- Private collection, Europe, by 2005 [Bernheimer-Colnaghi, London, by 2008].
- From whom acquired by the present owner.

Exhibition History

- Munich, Bernheimer. “Musen, Mütter, Models: Das Bild der Frau in der Kunst,” 22 June–3 August 2007, no. 3.
- London, Colnaghi, “The Artist in Art,” 26 November 2007–1 February 2008, no. 63.

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- Karau, Susanne Henriette. *Leben und Werk des Leidener Malers Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719)*. PhD diss. Universität Berlin, 2002, 146–48, no. B13.
- Bernheimer. *Musen, Mütter, Models. Das Bild der Frau in der Kunst*. Exh. cat. Munich, Bernheimer. Munich, 2007, 3, 12, no. 3.
- Colnaghi. *The Artist in Art*. Exh. cat. London, Colnaghi, in association with Emanuel von Baeyer. London, 2007, unpaginated, pl. 12, no. 63.
- Yeager-Crasselt, Lara. “Allegory of Painting.” In *The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer: Masterpieces of The Leiden Collection*. Edited by Polina Lyubimova, 218–19; 247, no. 76.



Translated by Daria Babich and Daria Kuzina. Exh. cat. Moscow, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts; St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum. Moscow, 2018.

Versions

Versions and Copies

1. Jacob Toorenvliet, *An Allegory of the Art*, oil on panel, 23.5 x 30 cm, present location unknown (sale, Sotheby's, New York, 5 June 2002, no. 25).

Technical Summary

The support, a rectangular copper sheet, has subtle undulations, a slight convex bow, and flexes when handled. Two shallow diagonal creases emanate from the left vertical edge and intersect left of the female figure's upper arm. There is one paper label, a black stencil, and numerical inscriptions but no wax seals or maker's marks.

A light-colored ground has been thinly and evenly applied with vertical brushwork. The paint has been extremely smoothly applied with delicate modeling, intricate detailing, and low brushmarking through the light highlights, flesh tones, and blue drapery.

The painting is recorded as having traces of signature in the lower left, however these traces are not readily apparent.^[1]

No underdrawing is readily apparent in infrared images captured at 780–1000 nanometers. Compositional changes visible in the images include a change in position of the female figure's proper right arm, which had originally been outstretched, her hand by the dog's head, a slight shift of her profile to the viewer's right, and a shift in position of the male figure's entire proper left hand, i. e. his pointer finger, his bent knuckles, and the angle of the back of his hand. A pentimento through the mahlstick indicates it was added after the book was painted.

The painting has not undergone conservation treatment since its acquisition in 2008 and remains in a good state of preservation.

Technical Summary Endnotes

1. Not readily apparent. Possibly in brown paint along the brown vertical plane between the row of books and the dog's head.





Alchemist

Jacob Toorenvliet
(Leiden 1640 – 1719 Leiden)

1684

oil on copper

31.6 x 25.3 cm

inscribed and dated in light-colored paint
centered along reverse: “Jacob Toorenvliet.
fec 1684.”

JT-107

How to cite

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<https://www.theleidencollection.com/archive/> (accessed May 15, 2018).

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Originating in ancient philosophy, alchemy in early modern Europe was considered a pseudoscience of transmutation, in which a base metal (for example, lead) was to be transformed into a noble metal, such as gold or silver. Reflecting contemporary perception of the mystic as well as the scientific nature of this tradition, two rather contradictory ways of portraying the alchemist exist in the visual tradition of the northern and southern Netherlands. One depicts the alchemist as a charlatan in search of the magical ability to create gold, and the other depicts him as a scientific scholar, laying the foundation for the early development of modern chemistry.^[1]

The first approach, employed throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, characterized the alchemist as the object of satire and a symbol of human folly. His futile experiments in changing base metals into gold were represented as sinful quests for personal gain. In this view of alchemy, alchemists inevitably ended up wasting precious time and money, thereby sacrificing the welfare of their families. (fig 1) Pieter Brueghel the Elder's (ca. 1525–69) drawing *Alchemist*, ca. 1658, depicting the alchemist as a profligate, served as an important source of inspiration for later generations of artists, including David III Rijckaert (1612–61), Jan Steen (1626–79), and Adriaen van Ostade (1610–85).^[2] In Jan Steen's *Village Alchemist*, for example, the artist depicts an elderly alchemist as being oblivious to the poverty of his surroundings, especially that of his own family. His young wife holds their infant in her arms and casts a discouraged glance up at an empty moneybag hanging from the ceiling (fig 2).^[3]

David Teniers the Younger (1610–90) introduced the second common portrayal of the alchemist in the 1640s, and his example was followed by, among others, Thomas Wijck (1616–77), Frans van Mieris the Elder (1635–81), and Cornelis Bega (1631–64).^[4] Despite the often skeptical view of the profession, alchemy was, in fact, a precursor to modern chemistry and pharmacology. In the course of their experiments, alchemists developed chemical processes like distillation and dissolution, and increased the knowledge of the physical world, which was of great practical use in, for instance, the chemistry of medicine, which distilled herbs to make elixirs.^[5] In Teniers's *Alchemist* in the Mauritshuis, the alchemist is portrayed as a wise and humble scientist diligently absorbed in his research and surrounded by a variety of instruments, such as distillation equipment (fig 3).^[6] Teniers's alchemists are often accompanied by one or

Comparative Figures



Fig 1. After Pieter Brueghel the Elder (ca. 1525–69), possibly workshop or immediate surroundings of Pieter Brueghel the Younger (ca. 1564–1637/38), *Alchemist*, ca. 1600–25, 46.7 x 62.3 cm, © The Leiden Collection, New York, PB-100



Fig 2. Jan Steen, *The Village Alchemist*, early 1660s, oil on panel, 41.7 x 29.8 cm (16 2/5 x 11 3/4 in.), The Wallace Collection, London



Fig 3. David Teniers the Younger, *Alchemist*, ca. 1650, oil on panel, 26.6 x 37 cm., Mauritshuis, The Hague, no. 261

two assistants who take charge of the execution of the experiment. His laboratories do not include motifs that suggest the self-deception and resultant misery often associated with alchemy, such as empty moneybags or weeping families.

Jacob Toorenvliet's interest in the alchemist as a scientist developed over many years. In the late 1660s, undoubtedly when he was living in Vienna, Toorenvliet first painted an image of a scholarly alchemist devoted to his experiment; he then repeated the subject in 1679 after he had returned briefly to his native Leiden (**fig 4**).^[7] In the latter picture the alchemist is depicted as an intellectual deeply engrossed in his experiment, evinced by the books and notes on the table.^[8] The depiction of an alchemist as a master instructing his assistant is first seen in Toorenvliet's *Alchemist and His Two Assistants*, which he executed in the late 1660s.^[9] The Leiden Collection painting is dated 1684 and was executed during the artist's Amsterdam years. Nevertheless, the painting's composition and style, with two half-length figures placed close to each other and against a shaded background, are comparable to works that the artist made during his Viennese period.

The inspiration for Toorenvliet's positive depictions of alchemists was undoubtedly David Teniers the Younger, whose paintings were highly regarded by Archduke Leopold Wilhelm and his successors in Vienna. Teniers's pictures of alchemists would have been familiar to Toorenvliet while he was in that city. As in Teniers's pictures, there is no allusion to misery or deception in Toorenvliet's paintings of alchemists.^[10] In the Leiden Collection painting, Toorenvliet's alchemist has one hand on the crumpled pages of a manuscript resting on a work table filled with vessels and a wooden bellows. He interacts easily with his assistant, who has come to show him a piece of metal he has been heating in the fire partially visible behind them. It is a moment of intellectual exchange, where the two men respond to the results of the experiment they are conducting. With a surety of touch and command of his subject, Toorenvliet creates an engaging scenario, where the men's active gesture and counter-gesture reflect the excitement of the moment and the expectation of discovery.



Fig 4. Jacob Toorenvliet, *An Alchemist*, 1679, oil on copper, 22 x 17 cm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, NM 661

Endnotes

1. Görel Cavalli-Björkman, *Dutch and Flemish Paintings*, vol. 2, *Dutch Paintings c. 1600–ca. 1800*, (Stockholm, 2005), 457; Carolyn Rose Rebbert, *Alchemy: Magic, Myth or Science?* (Exh. cat. Greenwich, Conn., Bruce Museum) (Greenwich, Conn., 2009), 3, 11–16.
2. For Brueghel's drawing and Philip Galle's print after it, see F. W. H. Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts ca. 1450–1700* (Amsterdam, 1950), 3:296; Nadine M Orenstein, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints* (Exh. cat. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art; Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen) (New York, 2001), 170–73, no. 61; cf. Matthias Winner, "Zu Bruegels 'Alchimist,'" in *Pieter Bruegel und Seine Welt*, ed. Otto von Simson and Matthias Winner (Berlin, 1979), 193–202. For David III Rijckaert, see Bernadette van Haute, *David III Ryckaert: A Seventeenth-Century Flemish Painter of Peasant Scenes* (Turnhout, 1999), nos. 79–82, 84; for Jan Steen, see *The Alchemist*, Städel Museum, Frankfurt (inv. no. 898); for Van Ostade, see *The Alchemist*, National Gallery, London (inv. no. 846) and another work in a private collection in the United States (photograph at the RKD (Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie/Netherlands Institute for Art History), artwork no. 120536).
3. The moneybag is joined by a bloated bladder, which was considered a variation of the theme of blowing bubbles, symbolizing transience and vanity of life. For this motif, see Eddy de Jongh, *Tot Lering en Vermaak: Betekenissen van Hollandse genrevoorstellingen in de zeventiende eeuw* (Exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (Amsterdam, 1976), 117–18. The two figures behind the alchemist could be common theatrical stooges, namely the hunchback and the boor, emphasizing the folly of the alchemist's quest. John Ingamells, *The Wallace Collection: Catalogue of Pictures*, vol. 4, *Dutch and Flemish* (London, 1992), 359–60, no. P209.
4. For Teniers, see, for example, the picture in the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig (inv. no. 140) and the one in Wasserburg Anholt, Fürst zu Salm-Salm, Isselburg (inv. no. 389): Margret Klinge, *David Teniers de Jonge: Schilderijen/tekeningen* (Exh. cat. Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten) (Antwerp, 1991), 136–37, no. 42; and Rüdiger Klessmann, *Die flämischen Gemälde des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts* (Braunschweig, 2003), 102–3, no. 140. For Van Mieris, see Otto Naumann, *Frans van Mieris (1635–1681) the Elder* (Doornspijk, 1981), 15, no. 11; and Quentin Buvelot, ed., *Frans van Mieris 1635–1681* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis; Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art) (Zwolle, 2005), 85–87, no. 6. Bega seems to have put more emphasis on the representation of still life motifs; see Peter van den Brink, ed., *Cornelis Bega: Eleganz und raue Sitten* (Exh. cat. Aachen, Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum; Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie) (Stuttgart, 2012), nos. 69, 70. Thomas Wijck

made a series of paintings in which the alchemist's family sometimes appears but is not impoverished: *The Alchemist*, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (inv. no. SK489) and *The Alchemist*, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

5. See, for example, the sixteenth-century alchemist Paracelsus, who was the founder of modern pharmacology: Carolyn Rose Rebbert, *Alchemy: Magic, Myth or Science?* (Exh. cat. Greenwich, Conn., Bruce Museum) (Greenwich, Conn., 2009), 15–16.
6. Quentin Buvelot, *Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis: A Summary Catalogue* (Zwolle, 2004), 302–3, no. 261.
7. Susanne H. Karau, *Leben und Werk des Leidener Malers Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719)* (Ph.D. diss., Universität Berlin, 2002), nos. A 94, 102; and Görel Cavalli-Björkman, *Dutch and Flemish Paintings*, vol. 2, *Dutch Paintings c. 1600–ca. 1800* (Stockholm, 2005), 475, no. NM661. Toorenvliet made another alchemist in 1676, see Susanne H. Karau, *Leben und Werk des Leidener Malers Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719)* (Ph.D. diss., Universität Berlin, 2002), no. A61.
8. This type of scholar can also be found in another group of pictures dated 1679, which represent men of learning, such as a Jewish scholar or an old man holding a book. Susanne H. Karau, *Leben und Werk des Leidener Malers Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719)* (Ph.D. diss., Universität Berlin, 2002), nos. A91, 95, 96, 98, 99, 100, 103–4, 105.
9. Susanne H. Karau, *Leben und Werk des Leidener Malers Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719)* (Ph.D. diss., Universität Berlin, 2002), no. B26. This picture was probably inspired by *An Alchemist and His Assistant in a Workshop* (ca. 1655) by Frans van Mieris the Elder, alongside whom Toorenvliet apprenticed with his father, Abraham Toorenvliet. See Quentin Buvelot, ed., *Frans van Mieris 1635–1681* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis; Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art) (Zwolle, 2005), 85–87, no. 6.
10. Toorenvliet's alchemist is even dressed in a fur vest and fur-trimmed hat similar to those worn by the alchemist in Teniers's painting in The Hague.

Provenance

- (Sale, Al. Helfert, Dorotheum, Vienna, 1910).
- (Possibly Sotheby's, London, 16 November 1960, no. 103 [£200 to Moss]; sale, Galliera, Paris, 29 November 1965, no. 133).
- (Sale, Christie's, Paris, 23 June 2009, no. 38 [Salomon Lilian B. V., Amsterdam, 2009]).
- From whom purchased by the present owner.



Exhibition History

- Greenwich, Conn., Bruce Museum, “Alchemy: Magic, Myth or Science?” 26 September 2009–3 January 2010 [no number, lent by the present owner].
- Williamstown, The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, “An Inner World: Seventeenth-Century Dutch Genre Painting,” 5 March–17 September 2017 [lent by the present owner].

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- Karau, Susanne Henriette. *Leben und Werk des Leidener Malers Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719)*. PhD diss. Universität Berlin, 2002, 103–4, no. A105.

Versions

Versions and Copies

1. After Jacob Toorenvliet, *Alchemist with His Assistant*, oil on panel, 34.3 x 25.9 cm, Nationalgalerie, Prague.

Technical Summary

The support, a relatively thin, rectangular copper sheet, has been hammered then rolled and has raised burrs along the reverse of all four edges. The panel does not flex when handled. There are three brown oxidation products, two inscriptions, and a light-colored wax dot, but no wax collection seals, stencils, labels or maker’s mark.

A dark ground or underlayer has a gritty, sandy texture with pin-sized raised dots. The paint has been applied smoothly with glazes wet-into-wet through the flesh tones with no areas of impasto or low rounded brushwork. Fine brushstrokes define the figure’s hair, beard, and fur collar of his jacket. The paint has flaked off the tops of the pin-sized raised dots and a fine network of craquelure has formed along most of the composition. Together with the panel’s hammered surface, the raised dots and craquelure give the painting a textured appearance



even though it has been smoothly painted.

The painting is unsigned and undated on the front, but is inscribed and dated twice on the reverse.

No underdrawing is readily apparent in infrared images captured at 780–1000 nanometers. Compositional changes visible in the images and as pentimenti include shifts in the position of the alchemist's proper left profile and to the fingers of the assistant's proper right hand, which rests on the alchemist's shoulder. Pentimenti along the lower left corner indicate that the horizontally oriented, folded, white paper was added after the bellows were painted, and the pot with lid was applied after the alchemist's proper right forearm was painted.

The painting was cleaned and restored in 2009 and remains in a good state of preservation.