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At Home with Ter Borch



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At Home with Ter Borch

An Artist Family
in Zwolle

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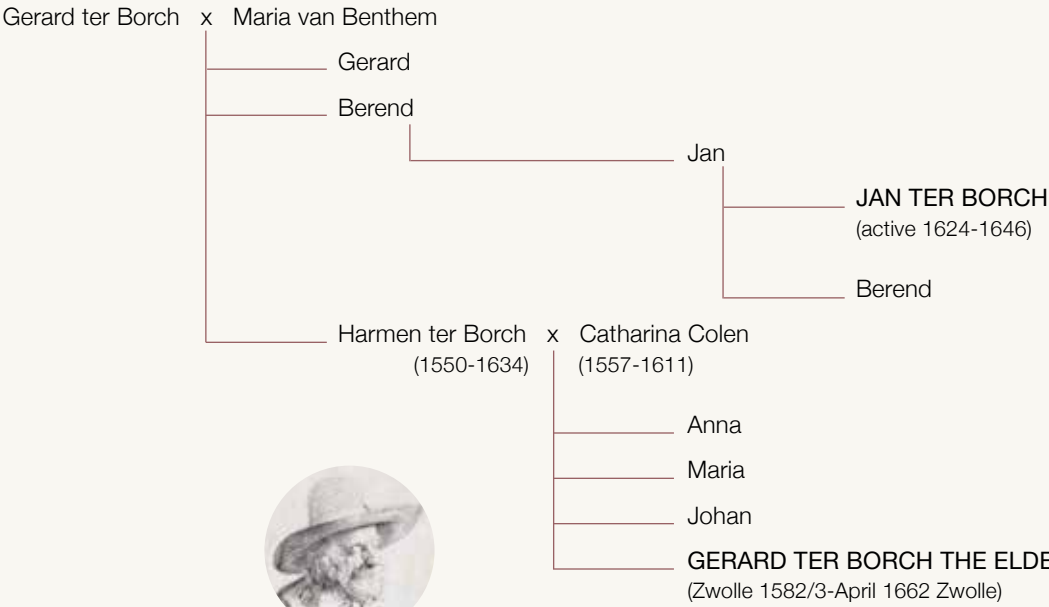
Chourouk Hriech

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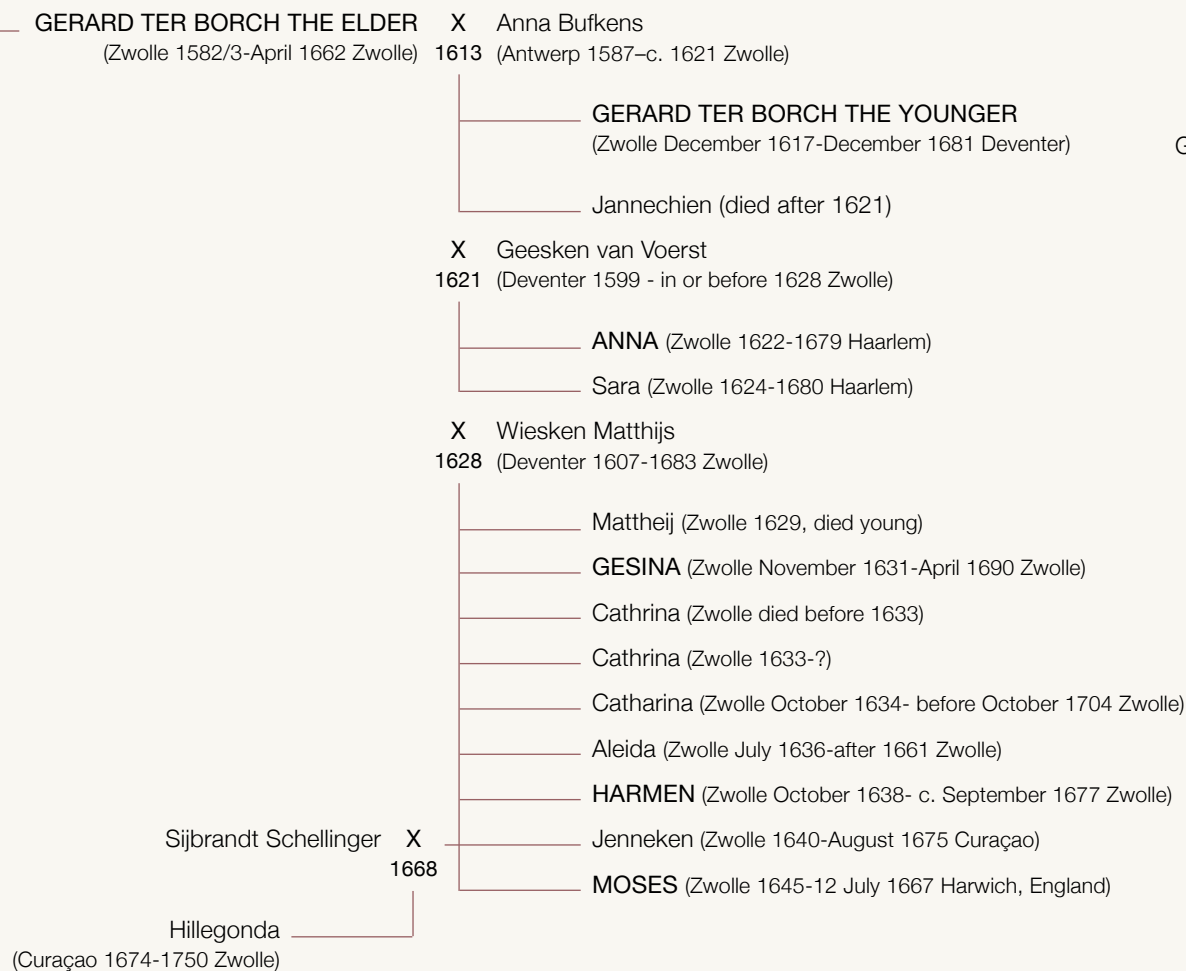
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Gerard ter Borch the Elder

Family Tree



Gerard the Younger



Anna



Gesina



Moses



Fig. 3
HARMEN TER BORCH
Seated Child and a Child playing the Violin, 1650.
 Black chalk, 107 x 160 mm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



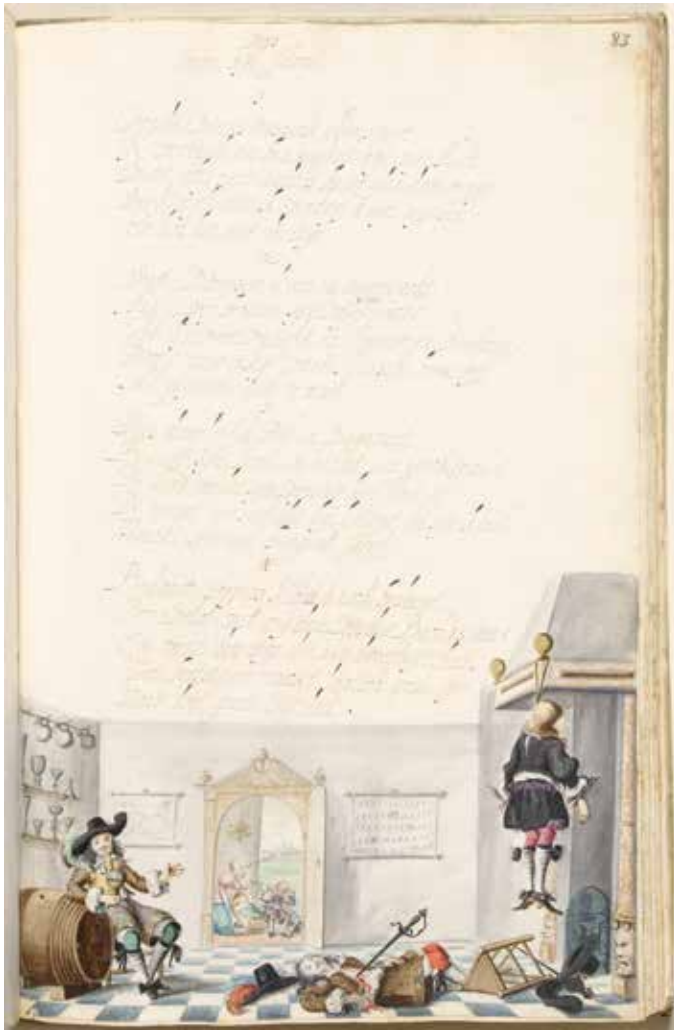


Fig. 5
GESINA TER BORCH
Interior of an Inn with Two Dead People and a Drinker, c. 1658
 (Poetry Album, fol. 83 recto). Black ink, watercolour, heightened with silver, 313 x 240 mm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Fig. 4
GESINA TER BORCH
Child playing the Violin, 1650 (Materi-Boeck, fol. 17 recto).
 Pen and ink, watercolour, 155 x 211 mm.
 Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

that convey movement, spontaneity, and a playful humour (cats. H4, H5, H8, H9). The artistic achievements of Moses, the youngest Ter Borch child, could probably have rivalled those of Gerard the Younger, had he not died in battle at the tragically young age of twenty-two. As a teen, Moses made self-portraits that bear an uncanny resemblance to Rembrandt's similarly unsparing explorations of physiognomy and expression (cat. M11, fig. 6).⁷ Moses made tender portraits of family members (cats. M4, M5) and in the early 1660s, perhaps during his brief service as a volunteer with the Dutch fleet, a series of hauntingly individualised studies of young men and boys in military dress (cats. M13–M17).

The instruction Gerard the Elder provided his children incorporated many of the elements of traditional academic education, in which students acquired the skills and techniques necessary for successful artistic practice in a specific sequence. Surviving drawings, many of which are dated, suggest that he did not follow that programme very strictly—probably because instruction happened more casually, within a domestic context, rather than a formal workshop setting designed to train future professionals. Typically, would-be artists began by copying individual elements from prints or drawings made by more accomplished artists: a face, a hand, some drapery. From there they progressed to making copies of the entire composition, reproducing the original as closely as possible and learning how to introduce perspective, light and shadow. This was a key component of instruction in the Ter Borch household. The 'studio estate' included numerous prints and drawings by (or after) artists like Rembrandt, Hendrick Goltzius, Peter Paul Rubens, Anthony van Dyck and others, as well as copies after them by Ter Borch family members (cats. M1, M6, X9, X13).⁸ The Ter Borch children benefitted from an ever-expanding collection of drawings by members of their own family, and these also served as exemplars for learning. In one instance, nearly two decades after Gerard the Younger sketched a scene of skaters outside the city walls of Haarlem, Harmen freely copied a portion of his half-brother's composition into his own version of the scene (cats. GJr13, H16). And, perhaps intrigued by the details of women's fashions in a foreign city, both Anna and Gesina carefully



Fig. 12
GESINA TER BORCH
Cockfight in the Sassenstraat, Zwolle, 1655
 (Family Album, fol. 34 recto). Brush in black
 and colours over traces of black chalk,
 243 x 360 mm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

(such as a tree) in the fewest strokes. This version was played outdoors from the 13th century onwards. In the 18th century the game shifted to a smaller field, with a specially laid course. Such courses were laid out at many inns, taverns and social clubs. The Grote Sociëteit club on Koestraat in Zwolle had a kolf course in the garden at the back, where the car park is now located.

Graves

Several Ter Borchs were buried at Grote Kerk or St. Michael's Church in Zwolle, now known as Academiehuis/Grote Kerk. The Zebinden estate includes a number of archive documents that give an impression of the graves.¹² According

to one of these sources, the grave numbered 130–131 was used most by the Ter Borch family (fig. 13). This grave was in the western section *aan de de marck deure in de Grootte kerck* ('by the De Marck door in the Grote Kerk') and was covered by a large slab of Bentheim sandstone bearing the name Gerhard ter Borch and a family crest, with four small tombstones of Belgian bluestone featuring the letters GtB. An archaeological dig in 2020 found three tombstones beneath the pews bearing the inscription GtB and a family crest. Elsewhere in the floor were three additional tombstones with the letters GtB engraved on them.

The old tombstone covering graves 130–131 was replaced after St. Michael's Tower collapsed in 1682.¹³ The story goes that Johannes de Hochepeid was the first to be interred in



Fig. 13
 On the left, a drawing of the gravestones on double graves 130 and 131 with the name Gerhard ter Borch and a brand mark; on the right, a portion of a gravestone with the joined initials 'GtB' and a brand mark, in the south section of the church.

the grave, followed by his son Jacobus.¹⁴ The other son, Isaac de Hochepped, is better known. He married Anna ter Borch, daughter of Gerard ter Borch (the Elder) and Geesken van Voorst, in Windesheim in 1655. A signed drawing by Gesina ter Borch of 1671 shows a funerary hatchment bearing the De Hochepped family crest attached to the column between the high choir and the northern choir (fig. 14). The tombstone in the foreground is difficult to identify, and is probably imaginary. It may be a tribute to Gesina's sister Aeltien, who died in 1671.

The grave still belonged to descendants of the Ter Borchs in the 18th century, with Lieutenant Jean or Jan de Lambert as the owner at that time. De Lambert, who was born in Perigord, was married to Gesina's aforementioned niece Hillegonda.¹⁵

A second grave (no. 339) in the central section, between the pulpit and the *meensliedenbank* (a bench reserved for important citizens), was covered with three tombstones.¹⁶ One of the gravestones has a quartered coats of arms in which the names Gert ter Borch and Gerhard ter Borch are carved. According to archivist J. I. van Doorninck these four quarters refer to the Ter Borch family and the Van Benthem, Beijlen and Blanckenstein families, who were related to them by marriage.¹⁷ This tombstone was later placed against the northern wall of the north aisle of St. Michael's Church, where it remains to this day. According to the register of burials from 1650-1678, Gerard ter Borch the Elder was interred here in 1661.¹⁸

The last will and testament of his son Gerard ter Borch the Younger from 1681 states that he too wishes to be buried in



Fig. 14

GESINA TER BORCH

Woman (Aeltien?) standing beside Death in St. Michael's Church, Zwolle, c. 1671 (Family Album, fol. 76 recto).

Brush in brown and colours over traces of black chalk, heightened with gold, 243 x 360 mm (sheet).

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Cat. GJr37

GERARD TER BORCH THE YOUNGER

Woman washing her Hands, with a Maid, c. 1655. Oil on panel,
53 x 43 cm. Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden



Cat. GJr48

GERARD TER BORCH THE YOUNGER

Woman at her Toilet, c. 1659-1661.

Pen and brown ink over traces of black chalk,
136 x 104 mm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Molijn's tutelage, he also learned to convincingly position groups of figures drawn in black chalk, and thus create his own compositions with figures. It is probably these drawings, these 'large, dynamic compositions' that Gerard Sr. was referring to in his letter of 1635. They proved to be fundamental to his career as a genre painter (cat. GJr 43).²³ In contrast to his father, Gerard the Younger continued to use black chalk on a regular basis throughout his career.

Only one drawing remains from Gerard the Younger's apprenticeship in Amsterdam in 1632, before he went to

Haarlem. It is a small study of a head in red chalk.²⁴ Using this technique, which again barely featured in the work of his father, he would produce several phenomenal head studies in his later career, possibly in preparation for a painting (fig. 8).²⁵ He also seems to have introduced this technique at the Ter Borch family home, as indicated by the drawings produced by his younger half-brothers and half-sister.



Fig. 8

GERARD TER BORCH THE YOUNGER

Head Study of a Boy with Downcast Eyes, c. 1675.

Red chalk, 115 x 96 mm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Harmen ter Borch (1638-1677)

The approximately 260 surviving drawings by Harmen ter Borch all date from a period of his childhood, between 1647 and 1655.²⁶ He appears to have stopped drawing entirely in the mid-1650s, and in 1661 he succeeded his father as *licentmeester* of Zwolle. Harmen's drawings are the creations of a teenager who, in contrast to his brother Gerard, was not trained by other artists, and so did not undergo any artistic development of note.

The majority of Harmen's work consists of drawings depicting one or more figures engaged in an activity. The figures

are often shown from the back or the side; there is little interaction with the artist. Harmen appears to have been an astute, discrete observer with an eye for different poses and the fall of fabric. Judging by the large number of drawings to which his father added the word 'inventur', he also frequently practised drawing figures he remembered seeing somewhere, or figures of his own invention. Besides people, Harmen also drew animals and landscapes, though to a lesser extent. The tiny drawing he made of a house in Enkhuizen is particularly fine, and reflects the pleasure he clearly derived from drawing (fig. 9).²⁷



Fig. 9

HARMEN TER BORCH

House in Enkhuizen, 1650. Black and red chalk, brush and brown ink, 65 x 87 mm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Cat. GJr41

GERARD TER BORCH THE ELDER

Woman playing a Lute, c. 1657. Oil on panel, 31 x 27 cm.

Royal Museum of Fine Arts (KMSKA), Antwerp



Cat. GJr33

GERARD TER BORCH THE YOUNGER

Portrait of Anthonie Charles de Liedekercke, his Wife Willemmina van Braeckel and their Son Samuel,
c. 1654/55. Oil on panel, 45 x 39 cm. Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem

Colophon

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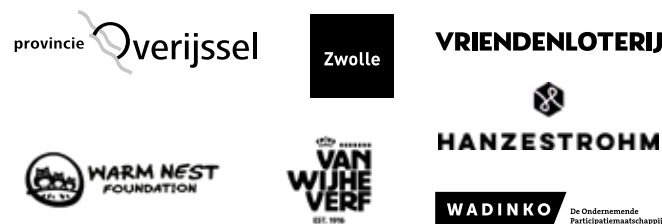
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