Hooch, Pieter de, circle of

Rotterdam 1629—Amsterdam (?) after 1684

Portrait of a family, c. 1655-1658
Oil on canvas, 85.5 × 107.5 cm

Invent. no. 3928

PROVENANCE: Gift of Dr Armin Stern, Vienna, 1910.

EXHIBITED: Berlin 1987, no. 9, ill. (Style of De Keyser); Turin 2004-2005, no. 70.


TECHNICAL INFORMATION: The canvas is fine and densely woven, and has a modern lining. Reddish-brown ground. The painting was restored by Mária Velekai in 1956-1957, at which time the canvas was applied to a new stretcher.

Portrayed here is a couple with three children; a girl at the far left, a boy at the right, and a very young child in a baby chair. In the woman's lap is an open copy of Jacob Cats' moralising treatise "Houwelick." A painting of a boy with an owl hangs on the wall at the right in the background.

The portrait was given to the museum in 1910 as a work by Thomas de Keyser. Although Térey already put a question mark behind the work's attribution in 1924, we have not been able to determine the correct attribution.

P. de Hooch – köre

Rotterdam 1629—Amsterdam (?) 1684 után

Család képe, 1655-1658 körül
Olaj, vászon, 85.5 × 107.5 cm

Lísz 3928

SZÁRM AZÁS: Dr. Stern Armin ajándéka, Bécs, 1910.


ÁLLAPOT: Finom, sűrűsítővel vászon, modern díszítőkkel. Vörös-csillag alapozás. 1956-57-ben Velekai Mária restaurálta, ekkor kapta a vászon új vakkerejét is.

name in his 1924 catalogue and the painting is nowhere included as an authentic work by the artist in the literature on De Keyser, it has continued to be catalogued ‘style of Thomas de Keyser’ in the museum’s publications. In 1937 Pigler added the comment that it might be by the same artist responsible for a family portrait in the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum in Berlin. This association with that particular work, which was from the immediate circle of De Keyser, and was destroyed in the Second World War, is certainly incorrect. The painting in Budapest has absolutely nothing to do with De Keyser, but is related to the Delft School of the third quarter of the seventeenth century. It is less easy to pinpoint the artist in the circle of Pieter de Hooch who could have been responsible for this family group, which on the basis of the clothing can be dated to around 1655-1658.

When the painting was restored in 1996-1997 several letters came to light on the front of the drawer at the bottom of the baby chair, which appear to form two monograms one above the other. The top one can probably be read as AD (or equally possible AO) and the bottom one probably as VR (fig. 34a). Aside from the fact that this reading of these letters is uncertain and that they could be part of a more extensive – though now vanished – inscription, there is not a single lead to be found to identify the artist on the basis of these ‘monograms’.

One of the most distinctive features in the group portrait in Budapest is the upward slanting floor which is perspective distorted. In this and various other elements, such as the fairly pronounced turn of the woman’s head, the portrait in Budapest closely resembles a few anonymous paintings formerly successively attributed Pieter de Hooch and Hendrick van der Burch, particularly the Interior with a standing man and a seated woman in Darmstadt (fig. 34b) and the Family group in an interior, once in the Robarts collection (fig. 34c). The rendering of the boy in the middle of the latter painting in particular is close to that of the lad at the right in the picture in Budapest. These three paintings may well be by the same artist, who, however, cannot be identified for the time being since Peter Sutton rightly rejected the attribution to Hendrick van
der Burch of the two paintings given here for comparison. The rendering of the figures, especially the two adults, in the picture in Budapest displays a certain kinship with works by Cornelis de Man, but as a whole it cannot be inserted into his oeuvre. However, it is perfectly clear that we are dealing here with a work by a Delft artist or a painter strongly influenced by Delft masters of the 1650s.

1 Bedaux and Ekkart 2000, p. 59, ill. 22 and 23.
2 Obi, la. 56 - 62, cm. i. H. Posse, Die Gemäldegalerie der Kaiser-Friedrich Museum, vol. 11, Berlin 1911-12, old, ill. no. 750, ill. 115, new, Adams 1953, vol. 11, ill. 163-164, old, D1 sz. (minor knocking attributich de idealis Hofstede de Groot javaslatához, hogy lehessen Jacob van Loo nézete).1