

Pieter Codde (1599-1678)

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Catalogue Raisonné

By

Jochai Rosen

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INTRODUCTION

Pieter Codde was born in Amsterdam in 1599, in a house known as the Paalhuis located on the *Nieuwe Brug* (The New Bridge). A mid-16th century map after a painting by Corenlis Anthonisz of *A Bird's Eye View Map of Amsterdam Looking South*, shows the Nieuwe Brug in the foreground (figure 1), with the Paalhuis at its center (figure 2). Unlike most houses within Amsterdam city walls, the Paalhuis stood secluded in the middle of the bridge facing the river IJ and the port. On its opposite side it faced the main waterway of the city known as Damrak. It overlooked a key point in 17th-century Amsterdam, an opening on the Nieuwe Brug through which small boats and barges entered the city to unload commodities. Although the Paalhuis no longer stands, today the Nieuwe Brug still serves as one of the most important gateways to the city and every passenger who arrives via the main train station has to cross it. A print by Zacharias Webber from 1664 shows the Paalhuis's commanding location on the Nieuwe Brug facing the harbor (figure 3). The view from that house was breathtaking and the print, as well as a contemporary painting by Jan Beerstraten (figure 4), depicts people standing near the house and admiring the harbor view. Living there surely felt as if one were at the center of the world and it may well have endowed the young Pieter Codde with a sense of self-importance. Such a sentiment appears to pass like a thread throughout his life and career as he grew to be self-aware, original, and a ground-breaking artist.

The seventeen provinces of the Low Countries had been united into a single political entity under the Spanish Crown by Emperor Charles V in 1543. In 1555 Charles abdicated his crown in favor of his son King Philip II, who was unable to maintain his father's achievements as a ruler. Heavy taxation and breaches of traditional city privileges caused unrest among the local population. This tension erupted over religious differences; during the 16th century the Reformation spread throughout the Low Countries, where it took hold in the form of a militant Calvinism which in 1566 inspired the outbreak of *The Iconoclastic Fury* (*Beeldenstorm*). Fervent Calvinists raided churches in Flanders, removed statues and paintings, sometimes burning them at the stake in public. Riots spread rapidly into cities throughout Flanders and then into Holland to the north.¹ Perceived by the ruling Spanish Catholics as both mutiny and heresy, the Crown's move to suppress these riots led to what is known as *The Eighty-Years-War*. The Spaniards sent an army to the Low Countries to extinguish the revolt but were unable to subdue the Northern Netherlands (i.e. Holland). During the ensuing war, the Dutch rebels blocked entry to the port of Antwerp and shifted the movement of trade to the port of Amsterdam to its north. With this, Antwerp, the largest port in Europe in the 16th century, and its thriving economy and culture slowly gave way to Amsterdam. In the 17th century Amsterdam became the gateway port for commodities coming from the New World; its economy boomed and a cultural flowering followed. The conflict also saw an enormous wave of thousands of Flemish Protestants emigrating from Flanders to the North, many of whom settled in Amsterdam, bringing with them significant capital and a culture of luxury which – among other things – encouraged the collection of art and home decoration. Among the *emigres* were highly skilled professionals, including many painters. This all contributed to the surge of the Dutch economy and a growing demand for works of art.

A key moment in the history of the Dutch Republic took place in the year 1609, when Codde was 10. Feeling unable to break the back of the Dutch rebels and engaged in other conflicts as well, Spain agreed to a twelve-years-truce. That year saw the creation of a line south of the rivers dividing Holland from the Spanish Netherlands, a line separating the Protestant dominated north and the Catholic southern Low Countries. To a large extent, this remains today as the border separating the Netherlands in the north from Belgium in the south. From 1609 onwards the Dutch Republic enjoyed

¹ Israel 1995, pp. 148-149.

a state of practical independence. Exploiting this situation to its advantage by expanding its seaborne empire and trade routes worldwide, within a few years it became a world power. Its economy and cultural life surged in what became known as *The Dutch Golden Age*. Formal Dutch independence was recognized by the Spaniards in 1648 with *The Treaty of Münster*.

Dutch economic growth encouraged a rising demand for luxuries among the middle class while a Flemish influence made paintings particularly desirable items. Calvinist rejection of human images meant that the Dutch public tended to reject sculpture but developed a lively demand for paintings. That traditional art patrons, namely the Catholic Church and the aristocracy, did not exist in 17th-century Holland resulted in artists participating in a highly competitive open market. Survival in this environment meant developing new subjects, new painting techniques and new methods of marketing. To better compete, many Dutch masters found a successful visual formula, specialized in a certain genre and sometimes even devoted themselves to a particular subject or motif.



1. Ian Iansz. after Cornelis Anthonisz. *A Bird's Eye View Map of Amsterdam Looking South, 1557*, woodblock (after an original woodblock by Cornelis Anthonisz. from 1544 after an oil painting of his own making from 1538)



2. Detail of figure 1: The Nieuwe Brug



3. Zacharias Webber, *View of the Nieuwe Brug in Amsterdam*, 1664, etching, 119x142 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. RP-P-1911-3584



4. Jan Beerstraten, *The Paalhuis and the Nieuwe Brug in Amsterdam during Winter*, mid-17th century, oil on panel, 84x100 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-A-20

In the late 16th and the early 17th century, prior to the *Golden Age*, there was in fact a thriving art market in Holland's Bishopric city of Utrecht. With its governing elite, Utrecht saw the flowering of the Dutch Caravaggisti using straight-forward genre and history paintings based on half-length figures depicted in large formats, done in an intense *chiaroscuro*. The old industrial city of Haarlem with its booming textile manufacturing scene, also saw a flourishing art scene in the late 16th century with leading figures such as Maerten van Heemskerck (1498-1574), Karel van Mander (1548-1606), Hendrick Golzius (1558-1617) and Cornelis van Haarlem (1562-1638). In the early 17th-century, Haarlem was home to Frans Hals (c.1582-1666) and his followers and it was under his influence that in the late 1610s and early 1620s painters such as Willem Buytewech (c.1591-1624), Esaias van de Velde (1587-1630) and Dirk Hals (1591-1656) popularized genre paintings depicting merry social gatherings. These were mostly small paintings depicting gatherings of figures in full length dressed in contemporary fashion, known as a Merry Company (*Vrolijk gezelschap*).

The truce of 1609 found the young Codde in a bustling and a fast growing city. Regrettably the loss in a fire of the Amsterdam Painters Guild records means that nothing is known of his apprenticeship or the identity of his master/s, though one can assume that in the decade following the truce he began an apprenticeship with one of the leading painters there. The city's active early 17th century artistic environment included the pre-Rembrandtists, in particular Pieter Lastman (1583-1633), who dominated it with their particular brand of history paintings. There were also other successful painters at the time, among them Cornelis van der Voort (1576-1624), Werner van den Valckaert (1580-c.1644), and David Vinckboons (1576-c.1632).

The rise of the Amsterdam economy and its art market sometime around 1620 also meant that the city took hegemony away from Utrecht and Haarlem, with its art scene becoming the dominant one in Holland. It is likely that at that crucial moment - sometime between 1620 and 1623 - Pieter Codde completed his training and became an independent master there.

From his earliest paintings (cat. nos. 3-5, 18-21 and 32-33) it is clear that Pieter Codde chose to be a painter of figures and therefore focused his output on portraits and genre paintings. He immediately embarked on creating an ultra-modern version of the Haarlem Merry Company, one detached from the carnivalesque ambience found in the works of Frans Hals and his followers. Instead, Codde created paintings with gatherings of young men and women which appeared to be realistic get-togethers of his townspeople. He was quickly joined in this approach by his close friend and colleague, the painter Willem Duyster (1599-1635). Moreover, his formula quickly found followers in other cities and was practiced by Anthonie Palamedes (1601-1673) and Jacob van Velsen (c. 1596/5-1656) in Delft as well as by Jan Olis (c.1610-1676) in Gorinchem (and later in Dordrecht).

In 1621, war in the Low Countries resumed. It was probably the resulting increased presence of soldiers in the streets of Amsterdam that led Codde and a group of colleagues (Willem Duyster, Pieter Quast (1606-1647), Pieter Potter (1597-1652) and Jacob Duck (c.1600-1667)) to formulate *The Guardroom Scene* (*Kortegaard*, *Cortegaerdje*), one of the most original genre formulae in 17th-century Dutch painting.

In the Netherlands of the first half of the 17th century, Pieter Codde and these colleagues constituted a distinct group of painters who specialized in depictions of Merry Companies, brothel, and Guardroom scenes. Along with Codde were Duyster, Simon Kick (1603-1652), Quast and Potter from Amsterdam; Duck from Utrecht; Palamedes and Jacob van Velsen from Delft; and Olis, active mainly in Dordrecht. All these painters were born around the turn of the 17th century and although working in different cities, they focused on similar subject matter painted in similar style. Moreover, their continual blending of the two genre formulae – the Merry Company and the Guardroom Scene - was unique to them.

My prolonged study of this group of painters led me to realize that Pieter Codde was their key figure. He was the most innovative and dominant among them, while his good social standing and his financial stability allowed him to gain the status of role model in the eyes of his colleagues.

An unusual example of an homage by one of his colleagues is found in Jacob Duck's painting of a *Brothel Scene* (figure 5) depicting a company of men and women merrymaking in an interior. Three paintings hang on its rear wall; of these the one on the right is easily identifiable as *Interior with a Dancing Couple* by Pieter Codde (cat. no. 33). More, the woman seated behind the table is quoted from this painting and appears again in another painting by Duck.² The use of an almost contemporary painting by Codde within a work by Jacob Duck and several quotations it engendered, must be seen as homage and as a token of the high esteem in which Codde was held by his peer.

² Rosen 2017A, cat. no. 64 and Beguin 1952, pp. 112-116. The painting on the left is *Salome Presented with the Head of St. John the Baptist* by Leonard Bramer (o/p, 78x105.4 cm, previously with Richard L. Feigen & Co., New York. See Hofrichter, F. F. 1992, *Leonaert Bramer 1596-1674: A Painter of the Night*, exhibition catalogue, Milwaukee, no. 9, pp. 60-61, illustrated.) The map by Claes Jansz. Visscher (1587-1652) on the right wall portrays the taking of Recife in Brazil by the Dutch forces in 1630; it was used again by Duck in his *Interior of an Inn* (Rosen 2017A, cat. no. 85.) Since two of the paintings and the map can be identified, it was assumed that the landscape painting between these is also based on a specific composition. As it shows affinities to Dutch Italianate landscapes of the early 17th century, it was previously attributed to Bartholomeus Breenbergh and Charles de Hooch. The first option was suggested by Beguin 1952, p. 113; the second appears in De Jongh 1976, p. 96, note no. 4, quoting A. Blankert, who had repeated this suggestion to me. Both painters specialized in this type of painting in the early 1630s. Unfortunately, this landscape painting cannot be definitely linked to a particular landscape or to a particular painter, but it appears also in a Merry Company by Duck, see Rosen 2017A, cat. no. 62.



5. Jacob Duck, *Brothel Scene*, c. 1632-1634, oil on panel, 40x68 cm, Nîmes, Musée des Beaux-Arts, inv. no. IP-1363

During the 1630s Codde's work was prolific; he made numerous paintings and oversaw the creation of many copies after them. During these years he worked alongside Thomas de Keyser (1596-1667) and Rembrandt (1606-1669), the leading portraitists in Amsterdam of this period. It was probably their success that drove Codde to specialize in genre painting, a branch that brought him recognition. Despite their fierce competition, it seems that Codde was well acquainted with these two painters and was on good terms with them.

Unlike the leading painters of the Dutch Golden Age - among them Rembrandt, Frans Hals and Vermeer - who all experienced financial difficulties, Codde enjoyed financial wellbeing throughout his life. He managed to withstand the intensely competitive art market and, in the mid-1640s, nearly ceased painting altogether. He had no other known sources of income and one can only assume that he stopped as he had already earned enough. He retired to a respectable canal house he had acquired for himself on the Keizersgracht, where he later died at the then ripe old age of seventy-nine.

The purpose of this study is manifold: it first aims to draw a comprehensive sketch of Pieter Codde's whereabouts and his personality. It then outlines his relationship with other artists, particularly those of the above-mentioned group of painters, as well as with such leading 17th-century Dutch artists as Rembrandt. The main goal is to conduct the first overall critical study of his paintings: his iconography, style, and the chronology of his development. This enables conclusions about Codde's unique and lasting contribution.

This study is based on a critical catalogue of the artist's *oeuvre* and an exhaustive first hand analysis of many of Codde's paintings. Chapter 1 provides an outline of his biography. The following chapters discuss his paintings and are arranged in chronological order: Chapter 2 is devoted to his early period and discusses paintings created from 1623 to 1628. It establishes Codde's early development and sets the foundation for the following chapters. Chapter 3 is devoted to Codde's unique paintings depicting the world of the painter's studio and his interaction with connoisseurs, in the period from 1628 to 1632. The following three chapters discuss his mature period between 1628 and 1638. Chapter 4 deals with military genre themes, Chapter 5 with civic genre and Chapter 6

with portraits. Finally, Chapter 7 is devoted to the few works he painted after 1638 while Chapter 8 examines Codde's methods of production and marketing.

Pieter Codde belonged to the first generation of Dutch painters who functioned under the new circumstances created in the Dutch art market of early 17th-century. Contrary to many of his colleagues, Codde was able to harness new themes, techniques, and means of marketing in order to succeed and it is therefore worthwhile studying how he achieved this.

CHAPTER 1

THE LIFE OF PIETER CODDE

This chapter offers a brief outline of the artist's personal biography and highlights elements of his personality and social *milieu*.

The fourth of nine children born to Jacob Pietersz. Coode (1567/8-1624) and Maria Jansz. (1568/9-1624), who married on July 11, 1592, Pieter Jacobsz. Codde was baptized on December 11, 1599 in the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam.³ He was born to a distinguished Protestant Reformed, middle class Amsterdam family which, from generation to generation, held municipal functions.⁴ His great-grandfather Jacob Codde (d 1528) was a city councilor; his grandfather Pieter Codde (d 1597), held a desired and well paid position as gatekeeper of the Chamber of Orphans,⁵ while his grandmother was the sister of the city's mayor.⁶ His father Jacob Pietersz was a *paalknecht*, living in the Paalhuis on the Nieuwe Brug, where he levied taxes from incoming inland navigation, oversaw the locks, and coordinated the mail between skippers and merchants.⁷

In the 17th century the name Codde was also spelled as Kodde, Kodt or Kodden. This name derived from codfish, called *Kod* or *Kodt* in 17th-century Dutch (today *kabeljauw*) which at one point adorned the artist's ancestral home. Pieter Codde spelled the name with a C, the way he is known now and to which he is referred in this book.

There was at least one other Pieter Codde living in Amsterdam at the time, a Catholic actor and writer who lived in the Kalverstraat.⁸ It is also clear that the painter Codde had some male relatives with the same name.

Sluijter draws attention to the fact that our Codde "like many of the most talented and successful masters working in the second quarter of the century – Rembrandt, Sandrart, Flinck, Bol, Backer, Breenbergh – ... was not the son of a painter, nor had he been raised in a milieu of art trade or crafts."⁹ Pieter Codde's master is unknown, but one can assume that he studied painting during the 1610s and evidence suggests that he was soon actively involved in the lively cultural life of Amsterdam, since at barely twenty in 1619, he published a song in a collection of poems celebrating the new year.¹⁰ He seemed to have continued his involvement in the literary circles of the city and in 1633, published a pastoral poem in the *Hollandse Nachtegaelken*.¹¹ Further evidence of Codde's ties to the literary world appears in the introduction to Elias Herckmans' 1627 tragedy *Tyrus*, where the playwright, acknowledges Codde's depiction of *Alexander the Great*,¹² unknown to us today, as his inspiration.

The first mention of Pieter Codde as a practicing painter is in the record of his marriage on October 10, 1623¹³ to the eighteen-year-old Marrittge Aerents Schildt (also documented as Marijtjen Arentsdr), the daughter of Arent Elbertsz Schildt, a hat maker who became a substitute

³ Dozy 1884, p. 52.

⁴ Dozy 1884, p. 53 (quoted by Sluijter 2015, p. 297) and Benoit 1914, p. 26.

⁵ Dozy 1884, p. 39 ("huissittenmeester der armen aan de nieuwe zijde") and p. 49 ("Bode van de weeskamer") and Van Eeghen 2012.

⁶ Benoit 1914, p. 26.

⁷ Playter 1972, p. 14; Montias 2002, p. 264, note 106 and Sluijter 2015, p. 297 all the above quoting Dozy 1884, pp. 46-49. Dozy mentions a document that attests to the possibility that Jacob Codde was also an auctioneer.

⁸ Playter 1972, p. 14 and Sluijter 2015, p. 297, both quoting Dozy 1884, p. 56.

⁹ Sluijter 2015, p. 297.

¹⁰ http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_nie190nieu02_01/_nie190nieu02_01_0006.php

¹¹ http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_hol014holl01_01/_hol014holl01_01_0106.php

Dozy 1884, pp. 58-59 and Playter 1972, pp. 17-18.

¹² Dozy 1884, pp. 57-58; Benoit 1914, p. 16 and Bauch, K. 1960, *Der frühe Rembrandt und seine Zeit*, Berlin, p. 71.

¹³ DTB no. 428, f. 233.

sheriff in Amsterdam. A well-to-do man who owned property on the eastern side of the Keizersgracht, not far from the Nieuwe Brug, the substitute sheriff was known by the nickname *De Haen* which in contemporary documents is also attached to his daughter and his son in law.¹⁴ This union reinforced Codde's social standing and financial stability.¹⁵ On April 25, 1624 their daughter Clara was baptized¹⁶ and as far as is known she was their only offspring.¹⁷ She is not recorded again, so it can be assumed she died young, but the date of her death is unknown.¹⁸ Codde's inventory of 1636 (see Appendix II) includes a painting depicting a deceased child who might have been Clara. In any event, it appears that she had died before the couple's separation in 1636. The inventory further mentions some *kindergoed* (baby linens) kept in the house, a reference striking a tragic note since the couple is known to have separated childless.

Codde's father died about a year after the marriage, on November 27, 1624, and was buried in the Oude Kerk.¹⁹ As can be gathered from the inventory in his will, his father was well-off,²⁰ though Pieter Codde's share of this inheritance only amounted to the sum of 283-1 guilders.²¹

In 1631, Pieter Codde was estimated to have capital of 1,000 guilders, a sign of his well-being,²² and he and his wife settled near the old St. Anthoniepoort at the end of Sint Anthoniebreestraat, in a house they rented from the nearby *Leprooshuis* (Leper Hospice).²³ The area soon evolved into an artists' colony, owing to its close proximity to the Painters Guild House²⁴ and found among Codde's neighbors were Rembrandt, Adriaen van Nieulandt (1587-c.1658), Francois Venant (c.1591-1636), Pieter Potter and others.

On the eve of the Twelfth Night of Epiphany, on January 6, 1636, Pieter Codde and Marritge Aerents Schildt spent the evening with another couple - Jan Pietersz. van Rijn and Cornelia Christien. The two men drank heavily and on the couple's return home, Pieter Codde attacked and raped their twenty-two-year-old servant girl, Aefge Jans, in the kitchen. When she told him she was afraid to become pregnant, Codde suggested she drink several cups of soap water (*wapeling*). After the assault, Aefge Jans left the Codde residence and returned to live with her mother where the artist's wife, Marritge Aerents Schildt, visited her. Marritge suggested her former maid file a complaint against Codde and extort money from him. It seems that on January 30, 1636 Aefge Jans did so and following that, both she and Pieter Codde were arrested and put in shackles in the detention room of the City Hall. They were both interrogated by the magistrates who had Aefge Jans' statement before them. Aefge stated that Marritge's niece, daughter of Marritge's half-sister who was living with the couple, told Marritge that Codde paid Aefge Jans a lot of attention whenever she was out of the house. Aefge Jans also said she had wanted to leave the couple's house but that Marritge convinced her to stay on, promising her a piece of jewelry. When confronted with his behavior, Codde replied that his wife is jealous. During his interrogation Codde said he was so drunk that he simply could not recall what had happened that night.

¹⁴ Montias 2002, p. 265, note 111.

¹⁵ Dozy 1884, p. 54 and Playter 1972, pp. 15-16.

¹⁶ DTB 6, f. 80, 25-4-1624, Oude Kerk.

¹⁷ Dozy 1884, p. 56 and Playter 1972, p. 18.

¹⁸ Playter quotes a document from August 21, 1635 she believes attests to Clara's death: "Een Kint van Pieter Jacobsz. op de Achterborchwal" (DTB 1045, f. 74, Oude Kerk), see Playter 1972, p. 18, note 58. She thought it "is possibly the record of her death". Since this Pieter Jacobsz. is not necessarily our painter and since Pieter Codde did not live in the Achterburchwal, it is impossible to corroborate this assertion.

¹⁹ Dozy 1884, p. 57.

²⁰ Dozy 1884, p. 57; Benoit 1914, p. 26 and Montias 2002, p. 264, note 106.

²¹ Dozy 1884, p. 46. Register van boedelverkoopingen der weeskamer, 17-2-1625 and Bewijsregister der Weeskamer, 25-11-1625.

²² Playter 1972, pp. 15-18 and Sluijter 2015, p. 297, quoting Dozy 1884, p. 57 and Frederiks and Frederiks 1890, p. 36.

²³ Dozy 1884, p. 56, 61; Playter 1972, p. 24; Dudok van Heel 2006, pp. 78-79, fig. 34; Dudok van Heel 2007, pp. 79-80 and Sluijter 2015, p. 297. Dozy has suggested it was perhaps the death of his father-in-law which provided him with the means to do this.

²⁴ For a detailed map of 17th-century Amsterdam specifying the location of the houses of most of the painters in and around St. Anthonisbreestraat, see Dudok van Heel, S. A. C. 2006, fig. 34.

wife is jealous. During his interrogation Codde said he was so drunk that he simply could not recall what had happened that night.

The next day, three women (*stadsvroedvrouwen*) in the service of the city magistrates, came to examine Aefge Jans in the torture chamber (*pijnkamer*) but found no evidence of rape, but given that the incident in question had taken place at the beginning of the month, this examination was pointless and probably carried out only in accordance with protocol. On that day, Pieter Codde was released from custody and ordered to remain within the city limits should the judges wish to summon him again. His release came after his family paid a bail of 1000 guilders.

On February 1, 1636, following the above mentioned fruitless examination, Aefge Jans was bound to an instrument of torture (*aan de palei gesteld*) and stretched with 200 pound weights. Before the full strength of the instrument was applied, she was asked whether she still stood behind her declaration and when she replied in the affirmative, the judges were satisfied that she spoke the truth and brought no accusations against her.²⁵

This affair led to Pieter Codde's separation from his wife.²⁶ According to the inventory of their household drawn on February 5, 1636 (Appendix II),²⁷ Codde was the owner of an extensive collection of paintings which Playter found to be "yet another testimony to a fairly lavish manner of living".²⁸

The fact that the scribe could not identify the author of some of the paintings - particularly a *Guardroom Scene* listed as by "Codde or one of his contemporaries" - suggests that Codde himself may not have been present during the inventorying. The fact that a large number of paintings, such as five by Jan van Goyen (1596-1656) and many further works by other painters, were not framed suggests that Codde, like so many of his contemporaries, complemented his income by dealing in paintings.

On April 25, 1646 Marrittge Aerents Schildt wrote her will and mentioned the separation from Codde.²⁹ In 1650 Pieter Codde was still living in Anthoniebreestraat³⁰ and his capital was estimated at 160 guilders.³¹

In 1651, Codde requested documentation by witnesses of the many love affairs his estranged wife had had during the previous decade. The first document is dated October 16, 1651³² and describes an affidavit made by Marrittge Robberts, the maid-servant of Marrittge Aerents Schildt. She gave this testimony before Pieter Codde and a real-estate agent by the same name, i.e. Pieter Codde, no doubt a relative. Two other men listened in on this from the attic and heard her speak. These were 50 year old Willem Kalff, Captain of the Rattlewatch (*Ratelwacht*), and nearly 25 year old Heereman Ellerts, a tradesman. Codde interrogated the maid as to the behavior of his estranged wife. Marrittge Robberts served as Marrittge Aerents Schildt's maid for nine years (from about 1642), and testified that a man named Symen Hop visited her mistress' house regularly for about six months and that on some occasions stayed overnight and even stayed for two and three days and that the couple shared a bed as if they were married. Then she mentioned another man by the name of Willem Bladens with whom Marrittge Aerents Schildt had been in a similar relationship for about six months. Codde then asked the woman if his wife ever expressed remorse about her behavior, and she said that indeed she did and was often sad about it and also cried and said that she wanted to correct her ways but that she again and again - and every time for a different reason - was tempted by men. Marrittge Aerents Schildt admitted to her maid servant that she did not know why she is so weak. Codde then asked the maid if she would agree to testify under oath and when she agreed went

²⁵ confessieboek and justitieboek of 1636, see Van Eeghen 2012.

²⁶ The term used in the original document is "scheiding van tafel en bed".

²⁷ NAA 836, Reg. 27 Notary F. Bruynigh, see Bredius 1888, pp. 188-190. On 17th-century Dutch inventories see Van de Veen 2005, pp. 17-25.

²⁸ Playter 1972, p. 18

²⁹ Dozy 1884, pp. 59-60. NAA 585, ff. 135-136, Notary L. Lamberti.

³⁰ Verpondingskohier 1650-1653, wijk II, fol. 158, see Dozy 1884, p. 56 and Sluijter 2015, p. 297.

³¹ Dozy 1884, p. 57.

³² 16-10-1651 Notary Van Nieuland NAA 2030, f. 318-321. Dozy 1884, pp. 60-61.

with her, along with the two eavesdroppers, to have this all declared before notary Salomon van Nieuland. The witnesses to the written document were the painter and a neighbor, Adriaen van Nieuwland, and a man by the name of Alexander Vlieck.

A second testimony regarding the misbehavior of Codde's estranged wife dates to October 30, 1651.³³ This had to do with an event that had taken place ten years earlier, around 1641. The testimony was given by Jan Valois, 52, and his 66 year old wife Cristina Anseel, a couple who knew Marrittge Aerents Schildt and visited her house in the Egelantiersgracht a number of times. They attested that on several occasions she complained that Symen Hop, a single man who had been consorting with and living with her for three years as husband and wife, had left her. Jan Valois testified that he asked her why she was so sad since she already had a husband and wondered why she did not return to him. This seems a sanctimonious line-of-questioning for he must have been familiar with Codde's crime and must have known that they were separated. She replied that she had twice become pregnant by Hop and that she had spent a lot of money on him. The couple also testified that they were once in her house where they encountered a man by the name of Willem Blau (perhaps the above-mentioned Willem Bladens) who lived with her for six months. Jan Valois also stated that one morning the couple had bragged that they had sex five times the previous night. Then Cristina Anseel testified that Willem Blau had been fraternizing with Marrittge Aerents Schildt even before he moved in with her. Additionally, she testified that one morning she had dropped in to visit Schildt and found her in bed with a painter by the name of Potter, almost certainly Codde's neighbor and colleague Pieter Potter. The surprised Potter jumped out of bed and then Marrittge invited Cristina Anseel to eat some sweets (*Kandeel*) with her and that indeed the three sat together and ate sweets. Witnesses to this testimony were Sacharias de Vod and Gerrit van Eyck.

These documents reveal that Marrittge Aerents Schildt lived a rather frivolous lifestyle. It is clear that, separated from her husband and in search of a male to look after her, she found herself involved with a number of lovers who all seemed to have taken advantage of and then deserted her.³⁴

Benoit thinks these two documents "seem to indicate that that year... [Codde] thought of a possible reconciliation..."³⁵ This notion appears to be completely off target, given the above. More likely, Pieter Codde was paying alimony to Marrittge Aerents Schildt and wanted to break free of his obligation by bringing to light his wife's loose lifestyle. What is certain is that his wife had a house of her own and employed a maid-servant, two facts attesting to her relative well-being, probably facilitated by her family.

In 1657, Codde's house on the Sint Anthoniesbreestraat was reappropriated by the Leper Hospice which owned it and on January 7, 1657, following this development, he purchased a house at Keizersgracht no. 385 in the amount of 5,000 guilders, an enormous sum and another indication of his financial well-being. Codde was to reside there until his death.³⁶

Codde wrote his final will at the age of seventy, on the day of Rembrandt's funeral, on October 8, 1669. He left some property to his former student, Albert Jansz., his only known disciple. Codde's inventory of 1636 mentions two paintings done by "den discipule van Pr. Codde" but it is not clear who this disciple is. Codde also willed some of his property to his maid-servant Barentje Willems, with the wish that she be well cared for. This expressed desire and the fact that Codde never remarried suggests that the couple had a much deeper relationship than that of a master and servant. Playter raises the likely possibility that this relationship was similar to that between Rembrandt and Hendrickje Stoffels.³⁷

³³ 30-10-1651 Notary J. Hellerus NAA 2047, f. 65vo.66, Dozy 1884, p. 61.

³⁴ Playter 1972, pp. 19-21.

³⁵ Benoit 1914, p. 27.

³⁶ 5de register van afschrijvingen bij decreet fol. 151 and 13de register van dekreeten fol. 136, see Dozy 1884, pp. 61-62.

³⁷ NAA 2495, f. 445-446, see Dozy 1884, pp. 63-65 and Playter 1972, p. 21.

Nine years later, on October 12, 1678, Pieter Codde died and was buried in the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam.³⁸

On January 16, 1679 a document emphatically presenting Barentje Willems as the sole and universal heiress of Pieter Codde, attests to the fact that she sold the house on Keizersgracht for 2,500 guilders,³⁹ and Dozy writes that by July 13 that year the house was transferred to the purchaser, one Sara Sloyer, widow of Mattheus van Uffelen.⁴⁰ This evidence reinforces the notion that Pieter Codde and Barentje Willems lived as a couple and that after his death she was forced to sell the house. Unfortunately, nothing is known of her subsequent fate.

³⁸ Handboekkapel no. 35, 2de laag, see Dozy 1884, p. 65; Wurzbach 1906-1910, vol. 1, p. 309 and Moes 1912, p. 156.

³⁹ 16-1-1679, Notaris N. Brouwer, Amsterdam: "Barentje Willems, eenige en universeele erfgename van Pieter Codde, Schilder, geasisteerd met Jan Leeuw verkoopt een huis oostzijde Keizersgracht van *f*2500". See Bredius notes, RKD.

⁴⁰ Kwijtscheldingsregister XX, fol. 54, see Dozy 1884, p. 66.

CHAPTER 2

THE EARLY PERIOD: 1623-1628

This chapter addresses Pieter Codde's *oeuvre* between 1623 and 1628, when he established himself as painter in Amsterdam and touches upon the question of his possible master or masters.

Judging by their style, only a few paintings by Pieter Codde could have been painted prior to 1625. It seems safe therefore to assume that he became an independent master around the time of his marriage in 1623 and had a relatively slow start. In both terms of quantity and quality, his output became significant only in the second part of the 1620s. During these years he established his style as well as his favorite subjects and it was also then that he began demonstrating his sense of self awareness.

Codde's Earliest Portraits

The artist's two earliest known dated paintings are portraits from 1625 and both demonstrate what is to be his signature feature: ambiguity. It is difficult to determine if these are genre presentation or portraits, a confusion caused by his merging of features typical of each of these genres. One of these two paintings is the *Portrait of a Woman Holding a Mirror* (cat. no. 3) depicting a young woman seated in a room with her hand pointing towards the viewer's left. The gesture is repeated by the father in the *Portrait of a Family* from London (cat. no. 25). In the lower right foreground a crouching cat, seen from behind, stares at a mouse in the half-open doorway at the back. A landscape painting depicting a shepherd with his herd hangs on the rear wall and another hangs on the side wall.

The painting is characterized by a monochrome of grayish-green tone with a touch of reddish-purple in the woman's dress. The color is thinly applied and nowadays exposes a *pentimento* at the door. Initially painted opening outwards, then later opening inwards; both stages are now visible.

Those inclined to see this painting as a genre scene, point to the sitter's apparent lack of individualized features and maintain that details such as the cat and mouse and the presence of a mirror suggest symbolism more befitting of a genre painting.⁴¹ I believe this work to be a portrait since it corresponds to other contemporary portraits in Amsterdam and also fits with the family portraits Codde painted at this stage of his career. Despite her smile the woman's somewhat rigid portrayal, it is in line with what one would expect in a portrait. The same rigidness and gesture, as well as similar apparel are found in a slightly earlier *Portrait of a Woman* by Cornelis van der Voort (fig. 6). As the same gesture is also found in a contemporary portrait of a woman (fig. 7) by Nicolas Elias. Pickenoy (1588-1656) – a student of Van der Voort's – we may surmise that the gesture originated in the latter's studio.

⁴¹ MacLaren 1960, p. 80.



Cat. No. 3



6. Cornelis van der Voort, *Portrait of a Woman*, 1617, oil on panel, 115.5x82.5 cm, New York, Gallery Nicholas Acquavella, 1945.



7. Nicolas Elias. Pickenoy, *Portrait of Maria Joachimsdr. Swartenhont* (1598-1631), 1627, oil on panel, 99x74 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-A-678

Pieter Codde's *Portrait of a Woman Holding a Mirror* (cat. no. 3) shares much in common with a slightly earlier Thomas de Keyser portrait of the painter David Bailly (fig. 8). Also a portrait of a single figure with objects of *vanitas*, this figure too is seated in a room by a table set on an oblique wooden floor with a half-open door in the background.⁴² Interestingly, De Keyser and Bailly were also associated with the studio of Cornelis van der Voort.

Codde's painting, which predates the *Portrait of David Bailly*, with its relaxed and smiling young woman holding a mirror, accompanied by the unusual motif of a cat stalking a mouse is unprecedented and groundbreaking for a portrait.



8. Thomas de Keyser, *Portrait of David Bailly*, c. 1625-1630, oil on panel, 73.7x53.7 cm, private collection.

The second portrait by Codde dated 1625 depicts the full-length standing figure of a young man who looks directly out at the viewer (cat. no. 4).⁴³ This room features a checkered tile floor and a marine painting depicting three ships navigating their way in a stormy sea on its back wall. Bruyn rightfully rejects the notion that the painting on the wall has a bearing on the young

⁴² Playter 1972, p. 54.

⁴³ In his left hand he holds a leather strap used to fasten a sword to the belt. This is a very unusual detail.



Cat. No. 4.

man's profession,⁴⁴ and concludes that the sea view is more likely a representation of the idea of *navigatio vitae*. The sea here likelier represents the world in which man, like a ship, must find his way through various storms.⁴⁵ This *Portrait of a Young Man Standing* by Codde bears a striking resemblance to Daniel Meijtens (1590-1647)'s *Charles I as Prince of Wales* dated 1624 (fig. 9). It

⁴⁴ Between 1756 and 1806 this painting appeared in the Bodleian Catalogues as [a portrait of] "Admiral van Tromp". See also Playter 1972, p. 53.

⁴⁵ Bruyn, J. 1987-1988, 'Op zoek naar een Bijbelse Interpretatie van Zeventiende-eeuwse Nederladse Landschapschilderijen', in *Onze Meesters van het Landschap*, Amsterdam and Zwolle, p. 44.

is clear that in his work, Codde attempts to portray this young Amsterdamer in the manner in which Meijtsen and other painters portrayed King Charles I of England and other members of his court.



9. Daniel Meijtsen, *Charles I as Prince of Wales*, 1624, oil on canvas, 203.1x126.3 cm, Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada, inv. no. 708.



10. Thomas de Keyser, *Portrait of a Man with a Greyhound*, 1624, oil on panel, 86x62 cm, The Hague, Schilderijengalerij Prins Willem V, inv. no. 1316.

Adams believes it was Thomas de Keyser who was the first to adapt these small scale full length portraits for the Amsterdam market,⁴⁶ as is seen in his *Portrait of a Man with a Greyhound* also dated 1624 (fig. 10). It seems reasonable that the slightly younger Codde might follow this newly fashionable portrait formula introduced by De Keyser. Be that as it may, it was Codde's painting that made an immediate impact on contemporary portrait painting, as can be gathered from Harmen Wieringa (1590-1650)'s *Portrait of a Man Standing* of 1625 (fig. 11). After Wieringa adopted this formula introduced by Codde, he did little to change it and continued using it well into the 1630s.⁴⁷



11. Harmen Wieringa, *Portrait of a Man Standing*, 1625, oil on copper, 17.5x13.5 cm, private collection

⁴⁶ Playter 1972, p. 53; Adams 1985, pp. 209-214 and Bikker, J., Y. Bruijnen and G. Wüsteman, 2007, *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam*, Amsterdam, p. 106.

⁴⁷ Weller, D. P. 2014, *Small Treasures: Rembrandt, Vermeer, Hals, and their Contemporaries*, Raleigh, p. 234.

Codde's *Young Man Standing* (cat. no. 4) is dominated by a monochrome tint of grayish-green tone with two highlights of localized color; a deep claret seen in both the table cloth and the curtain. Just like Codde's contemporary *Self-Portrait in the Studio* (cat. no. 1) and *Portrait of a Woman Holding a Mirror* (cat. no. 3) this work too includes a conspicuous painting on its back wall.

Pieter Codde and Thomas de Keyser

Many of Pieter Codde's portraits and some of his genre presentations, bear a striking affinity to works by de Keyser.⁴⁸ De Keyser, as noted Codde's contemporary in Amsterdam, also specialized in portraiture and became the leading portraitist in Amsterdam of the 1620s. It is possible, though no record confirms it, that De Keyser studied with Cornelis van der Voort⁴⁹ and as stated previously is known to have painted a portrait of David Bailly (1584-1657) (fig. 8) who was a student of Van der Voort's.⁵⁰

For many years, it was assumed that De Keyser did not paint genre themes, but recently, a painting depicting a couple making music was attributed to him⁵¹ and it appears that a *Guardroom Scene* of 1632 is also by his hand.⁵² Both these works reveal a close affinity in style and subject matter to genre paintings by Codde and his circle and seem to support the notion of close ties between the two painters.

There is quite a large number of small portraits of men, many in an oval format, sometimes assigned to Pieter Codde or to Thomas de Keyser. As many of these are very simple in concept, small in format, and lack strong stylistic characteristics, it is difficult to attribute them with any certainty, but many reveal neither the characteristics of Codde nor of De Keyser's hand.⁵³

Of these paintings, it seems only the *Portrait of a Man* (cat. no. 6) is indeed by Codde. It is 18.4 centimeters high and only 13.3 centimeters wide and bears Pieter Codde's monogram and the date 1630 on its back (see Appendix I). Its attribution vacillated between Codde and De Keyser but when Dr. Cornelis Hofstede de Groot saw the work at auction in June 1929, he agreed it was a Codde, but quoted a note attached to the back, according to which Théophile Thoré-Bürger ascribed it to Thomas de Keyser.⁵⁴ Another painting of this group which might be attributable to Codde is the *Portrait of a Man* from Bordeaux (cat. no. A3).

⁴⁸ Playter 1972, p. 28. This similarity is particularly evident in an *Interior with Figures* by Thomas de Keyser, from the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin (Potterton 1986, pp. 75-77). A copy of this painting was mistakenly auctioned as Codde: o/p, 32.5x39.5 cm, sale O. Huldshinsky, Berlin, 10-5-1928, lot 5.

⁴⁹ Playter 1972, p. 29; Adams, A. J. in Rem, P. H. et al. "Keyser, de." *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed January 8, 2017, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T046383pg3>.

⁵⁰ Houbraken, A. 1718, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, vol. 1, p. 93.

⁵¹ Thomas de Keyser, *Elegant Couple Playing Music in an Interior*, c. 1630, o/p, 53x45 cm, Rouen, Musée des Beaux-Arts et de la Céramique de Rouen, inv. no. 1843.4. See Bakhuys, D., J. Hillegers and C. Tainturier, 2009, *Tableaux flamands et hollandais du Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen*, exhibition catalogue, Paris, no. 26.

⁵² Attributed to Thomas de Keyser, *The Tric-Trac Players*, 1632, o/p, 81x69.2 cm. Sale Magin, Paris, Président des commissaires priseurs, 23-6-1922, lot 22. I wish to thank Jasper Hillegers for sharing his thoughts and material on this painting.

⁵³ See for example *Portrait of a Man*, c. 1624-1627, o/p, oval, 18x13.5 cm, Enschede, Rijksmuseum Twenthe, inv. no. 112. This painting was attributed in the past to both Pieter Codde (S. Gudlaugsson) and Thomas de Keyser (O. ter Kuile) as well as to David Bailly (C. Hofstede de Groot) and Dirck Dircksz. Santvoort, but it actually lacks the qualities of any of these painters hand and seems rather to have been painted by a lesser master.

⁵⁴ Dutch Institute for Art History (RKD), Hofsted de Groot fiche no. 1666952.



Cat. No. 6

Pieter Codde's Early Pendant Portraits

A major problem with Pieter Codde's portraits touched upon earlier, concerns their genre-like appearance. Their ambiguity is clear in two pair of the artist's early pendants. One pair is found in Strasbourg with one painting depicting the single figure of a woman (cat. no. 10) and the other, the single figure of a man (cat. no. 11). The woman plays a *theorbo*, her lips parted apparently in song. The man, seated in half-length wears a wide-brimmed hat and a glove on one hand, while the other remains ungloved. A conspicuous love lock falls onto his left shoulder. Both figures gaze out at the viewer and are well-dressed. Although her music playing and song hint at a genre scene, here these are apparently a part of an informal pair of amorous portraits. As seen, the informal portrait is

a formula favored by Codde. The color scheme of both these portraits, like the portrait of a scholar to be discussed (cat. no. 9), is completely monochromatic yellowish-gray.

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Cat. No. 9