

# Gerard ter Borch II

1617–1681

THE MOST ACCOMPLISHED MEMBER of a gifted and well-to-do artistic family, Gerard ter Borch was born in 1617 in Zwolle. Probably not long after the death of his mother, Anna Bufken, in 1621, Ter Borch began his training with his father, the draftsman Gerard ter Borch the Elder (1584–1662). He was clearly a precocious pupil: an accomplished drawing of a figure seen from behind (Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) is dated 25 September 1625, when he was only eight years old. An inscription on another drawing suggests that he was in Amsterdam by 1632, but in 1633 he was back in Zwolle. The following year he went to Haarlem to study with Pieter Molijn (q.v.) and entered the guild there in 1635. The same year Ter Borch undertook the first of his many trips abroad, traveling to London to work with his uncle, the engraver Robert van Voerst. According to Houbraken, the painter visited Italy, Spain, and France, as well as various parts of the Netherlands and Flanders, in subsequent years.

By 1646 Ter Borch was in Münster, Westphalia, where he painted a number of small works and also his famous group portrait depicting *The Swearing of the Oath of Ratification of the Treaty of Münster* (1648, National Gallery, London, inv. no. 896). Houbraken suggests that it was also in 1648 that Ter Borch traveled with the Conde de Peñaranda to Madrid, where he painted portraits of Philip IV and his court. Other documents place the artist in Amsterdam in November 1648, The Hague in 1649, Kampen in 1650, and Delft on 22 April 1653, when he and Johannes Vermeer (q.v.) were co-witnesses to the signing of an affidavit. On 14 February 1654 he married Geertruyt Matthijs, with whom he settled in Deventer, becoming a citizen on 13 February 1655 and a *gemeensman* [city counselor] in 1666. Although documents indicate he again visited Amsterdam in 1674 and The Hague and Haarlem in 1675, he lived in Deventer until his death on 8 December 1681.

In his earliest works, Ter Borch depicted barrack-room scenes similar to those of Willem Duyster (1598/1599–1635) and Pieter Codde (1599–1678). Most of his later genre scenes, however, focused on the more refined elements of Dutch society. These works are generally small and upright in format and typically depict two or three elegantly clad, full-length figures engaged in an activity such as letter

writing or music making. They are executed with great sensitivity of touch and show an interest in the psychology of the sitters. Ter Borch also painted a large number of small-scale, full-length portraits. His most important student was Caspar Netscher (c. 1635/1636–1684), who learned many of his master's techniques for rendering luxurious textures, and who painted, in addition to his own original compositions, a number of signed copies of Ter Borch's works.

## Bibliography

- Houbraken 1753, 3: 32, 34–40.  
Smith 1829–1842, 4 (1833): 111–142; 9 (1842): 529.  
HdG 1907–1927, 5 (1913): 1–145.  
Hannema 1943.  
Plietzsch 1944.  
Gudlaugsson 1959–1960.  
The Hague 1974.  
Philadelphia 1984: 152–154.  
Kettering 1989.  
Brown/MacLaren 1992: 31–32.

1937.1.58 (58)

## *The Suitor's Visit*

c. 1658  
Oil on canvas, 80 x 75 (31½ x 29⅞)  
Andrew W. Mellon Collection

**Technical Notes:** The tightly woven, plain-weave fabric support, composed of fine irregularly spun threads, was lined with the tacking margins trimmed. Broad cusping is visible along the left and right edges. A smooth beige ground is striated with white in places, suggesting the presence of a white underlayer.

Thin fluid paint layers are applied freely and blended wet into wet in a series of thin scumbles of liquid, soft-edged colors. Fine details are painted wet over dry. Flesh tones are composed of a gray underpainting, thinly glazed to form shading, more thickly overpainted to create light areas. Microscopic examination reveals a change in the placement of the dog's front legs and an adjustment of the suitor's proper left-hand gesture.

Although the background has probably darkened over time, the painting is in relatively good condition, with small abraded losses in the thinly applied darks. The suitor's proper right arm was extensively retouched and the musician's necklace reinforced. No conservation work has been carried out since acquisition.