NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ONLINE EDITIONS
Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century

Cornelis Jonson van Ceulen
English, 1593 - 1661

Anna Maria van Schurman

1657

oil on panel
overall: 31 x 24.4 cm (12 3/16 x 9 5/8 in.)
Inscription: center left, below the cathedral, in the portrait medallion: Cornelius Ionson / Van Ceulen / fecit / 1657
Gift of Joseph F. McCrindle 2002.35.1

ENTRY

This monochrome panel painting, or grisaille,[1] made in preparation for an engraving by Cornelis van Dalen the Younger (Dutch, 1638 - 1664) [fig. 1], depicts a learned lady of international renown: Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678).[2] Van Schurman was born in Cologne on November 5, 1607, to Frederik van Schurman and Eva von Harff, both of whom came from wealthy and noble Protestant families.[3] By 1615 Anna's parents had settled in Utrecht, where she soon demonstrated remarkable talent in embroidery, calligraphy, and the making of intricate paper cuttings. In the 1630s she took lessons in drawing and engraving from Magdalena van de Passe (Dutch, 1600 - 1638), daughter of the engraver Crispijn van de Passe I (Dutch, c. 1565 - 1637). Van Schurman began making small portraits, including self-portraits, in a variety of mediums, among them pastels and oils, and small sculptures made of boxwood or wax. In recognition of her artistic abilities, the Saint Luke's Guild of Utrecht gave her an honorary membership in 1643.[4]

Van Schurman was renowned even more for her intellectual concerns than for her artistic accomplishments. Referred to as the Utrecht "Minerva," she exchanged poems and corresponded with some of the greatest minds of the day, including Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687), René Descartes (1596–1650), and Jacob Cats (1577–1660).[5] In 1637 Cats dedicated his book *Trou-ringh* (Wedding Ring) to her, and he included her engraved self-portrait opposite the frontispiece.[6] When Utrecht University opened its doors in 1636, she attended lectures, thus becoming

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the first woman to go to university in the Netherlands.[7] Not only did she learn twelve languages, even writing a grammar book for the Ethiopian language, but she also became well versed in philosophy, botany, and medicine. Under the guidance of the famous scholar Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676) she studied theology, a subject that preoccupied her during much of her later life. Her many scholarly works include her dissertation, written in Latin in 1641, in which she discussed whether women should have access to higher education.[8] In 1659 this dissertation was translated into English and published in London as *The Learned Maid*. Finally, Van Schurman's personal qualities of piety and virginity became important components of her international reputation.

When Cornelis Jonson van Ceulen arrived in Utrecht in 1652 after a long and distinguished career as a portrait painter in London, he quickly became the principal portrait painter of that Dutch artistic center.[9] Jonson had begun his career in London in the late 1610s, painting portraits that were rather smooth in execution and stiff in appearance. After Sir Anthony van Dyck (Flemish, 1599 - 1641) came to England in 1632 and befriended him, however, Jonson learned to portray sitters in a more natural and elegant manner.[10] In Utrecht Jonson continued to paint large-scale portraits that reflect Van Dyck's influence, both in the refined poses of the sitters and in the fluent painting techniques he used to render their costumes.[11] These same pictorial qualities characterize this small, monochrome panel painting of Van Schurman. She gazes directly out at the viewer, her features recognizable through comparisons with her self-portraits.[12] She wears a flowing gown with a shawl that wraps gracefully over her left arm as she gently clasps a ribbon on her bodice. In her right hand she holds a book indicative of her erudition. Behind her is a view of the Utrecht cathedral, a backdrop that associates her not only with the city where she spent most of her life but also with the Christian piety for which she was so well known.

The monochrome painting technique that Jonson used here is another reflection of Van Dyck's influence. During the late 1620s Van Dyck used rapidly executed monochrome studies as models for the large series of portrait prints he made of artists, collectors, princes, statesmen, and philosophers that became known as the *Iconography*.[13] Jonson followed Van Dyck's model in creating this monochrome study for a portrait print and also emulated the Flemish master's freedom of touch when rendering highlights along the folds of Van Schurman's costume. Indeed, so close are the stylistic associations between this painting and Van Dyck's monochrome oil sketches that the great nineteenth-century German scholar

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Gustav Waagen, upon seeing this portrait of Van Schurman in the collection of the Reverend J. Fuller Russell, was inclined to reattribute the Van Dyck monochrome portrait sketches in the Duke of Buccleuch's collection to Jonson.[14]

The allegorical elements portrayed in the oval frame surrounding the image of Van Schurman, however, have no associations with Van Dyck but rather belong to earlier Dutch traditions of portrait engravings. In a 1580 portrait of Josina Hamels by Hendrick Goltzius (Dutch, 1558 - 1617), for example, attributes of the sitter are symbolically arrayed within the framing device [fig. 2].[15] In Jonson's painting, the brushes, palette, and mahlstick at the lower left and the T square, compass, needlepoint of a tulip, and drawing at the upper left refer to Van Schurman's artistic talents. Her erudition is alluded to by the globe and caduceus in the upper right as well as by the open book in the lower right. The lute on the right refers to her musical skills. Below her image two winged putti hold an unfurled banner between them. Although the banner is blank in the painting, an honorific Latin inscription written in 1661 by Constantijn Huygens appears in Van Dalen's engraving of the work, which Clement de Jonghe published in three states in Amsterdam between around 1657 and 1661.[16] Finally, the putto at the left supports a framed oval image of a laurel tree, symbolic of Van Schurman's enduring fame.

In Utrecht Jonson specialized in large-scale portraits, and this small but exceptional monochromatic panel painting is unique in his known oeuvre. Preparatory paintings such as this grisaille are difficult to find; thus, it is challenging to pinpoint this painting's genesis. The explanation for this exceptional work must lie in the artist's desire to create a portrait engraving that celebrated the many talents of this famous sitter. The idea to celebrate this renowned woman could have come from Jonson himself, who had an experienced career in portraiture and printmaking, and who would have been familiar with Van Schurman through fellow artist and ex-patriot in England Jan Lievens (Dutch, 1607 - 1674).[17] Lievens also rendered a portrait of Van Schurman in 1649, and Van Schurman's publications were being translated into multiple languages, including French and English. Jonson may also have felt a special connection with Van Schurman as they both had family roots in Cologne and were Protestants in a city that had a strong Catholic flavor. On the other hand, it may have been a collaborative effort from the start, considering that the National Gallery of Art painting was part of a project that involved at least three other individuals—Huygens, Van Dalen, and De Jonghe.

Regardless of who instigated this engraving, the image was related to one of Van Schurman that appeared in 1657 in Jacob Cats' publication *Alle de Wercken, soo*

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oude als nieuwe (the print introduced the section titled “Proteus of Sinne- en minnebeelden”) [fig. 3]. The artist, Steven van Lamsweerde (c. 1620–1686), a Utrecht engraver, derived his portrait from a bust-length self-portrait that Van Schurman had made in 1640, when she was thirty-three years old.[18] Although Jonson based his monochrome sketch on Van Lamsweerde’s print—including not only the curtain behind the sitter and the distant view of the Utrecht cathedral but also the illusionistic oval frame, a celebratory text, and allegorical elements that allude to Van Schurman’s many and varied scholarly and artistic accomplishments—he clearly sought to improve upon that misleading and mediocre antecedent. In Jonson’s portrait, the sitter, aged fifty, possesses a human dimension lacking in Van Lamsweerde’s print. She is at once more elegant and more thoughtful, a person capable of achieving the extaordinary level of intellectual, artistic, and spiritual inquiry that defined this remarkable woman.

Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.

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COMPARATIVE FIGURES

fig. 1 Cornelis van Dalen after Cornelis Jonson van Ceulen, *Anna Maria van Schurman*, published by Clement de Jonghe, 1661, engraving, Department of Image Collections National Gallery of Art Library, Washington, DC.

fig. 2 Anonymous, *Self Portrait after Anna Maria van Schurman*, engraving, from Jacob Cats, *s'Werelts begin midden en eynde, besloten in den trou-ringh, met den proef-steen van den selven*, Dordrecht, 1637, National Gallery of Art Library, Washington, DC, David K. E. Bruce Fund

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fig. 3 Steven van Lamsweerde, *Anna Maria van Schurman*, 1657, engraving, from Jacob Cats, Alle de Wercken, soo oude als nieuwe (Amsterdam, 1700), fol. 31, National Gallery of Art Library, Washington, DC, David K. E. Bruce Fund

NOTES

[1] A monochrome painting, or grisaille, was often called a *grauwtje* in Dutch.

[2] I am grateful to Jennifer Henel and Molli Kuenstner for their help in preparing this entry.

[3] Mirjam de Baar and Brita Rang, "Anna Maria van Schurman: A Historical Survey of Her Reception since the Seventeenth Century," in *Choosing the Better Part: Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678)*, ed. Mirjam de Baar et al., trans. Lynne Richards (Dordrecht, 1996), 1. Frederik van Schurman had a collection of paintings that included Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder's *Bouquet of Flowers in a Glass Vase*.

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[4] See Katlijne van der Stighelen, "'Et ses artistes mains': The Art of Anna Maria van Schurman," in *Choosing the Better Part: Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678)*, ed. Mirjam de Baar et al., trans. Lynne Richards (Dordrecht, 1996), 58.

[5] For a list of her treatises, poems, and publications, see Mirjam de Baar et al., ed., *Choosing the Better Part: Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678)*, trans. Lynne Richards (Dordrecht, 1996), 155–157.

[6] Jacob Cats, *'s Weerelts begin, midden, ende, besloten in den Trou-ringh, met den proefsteen van den selven* (Dordrecht, 1637).

[7] According to documentation, she did not actually attend as a full student, but was allowed to sit in the back as an "observer." Gisbertus Voetius first invited her to write poems for the inauguration of Utrecht University and then allowed her to attend lectures in a loge that concealed her from other students; thus she was the (unofficial) first female student. See Joyce L. Irwin, "Anna Maria van Schurman and Her Intellectual Circle," in Anna Maria van Schuman, *Whether a Christian Woman Should Be Educated and Other Writings from Her Intellectual Circle,* ed. and trans. Joyce L. Irwin (Chicago and London, 1998), 5.

[8] Her dissertation argued that, indeed, Christian women should have access to higher education, but only if it did not interfere with other womanly duties as a wife and mother, for example. See Anna Maria van Schuman, *Whether a Christian Woman Should Be Educated and Other Writings from Her Intellectual Circle,* ed. and trans. Joyce L. Irwin (Chicago and London, 1998).

[9] Among the highlights of his career in England, he was named a painter in the court of King Charles I in 1632.

[10] For more information on the Van Dyckian portrait style of Jonson, see Hilbert Lootsma, "Tracing a Pose: Govert Flinck and the Emergence of the Van Dyckian Mode of Portraiture in Amsterdam," *Simiolus* 33, no. 4 (2007–2008): 225.

[11] A painting by Jonson from 1660, alleged to portray Anna Maria van Schurman, shows a more formal portrait than that in the grisaille, with Van Dyckian rendering. See *Portrait of a Woman* at the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille, inv. no. 103LL. See Hans Buijs and Maria van Berge-Gerbaud, *Tableaux flamands et hollandais du Musee des Beaux-Arts de Lyon* (Paris, 1991), no. 24, 70–72. Prints made after Jonson's paintings, such as the large collection at the National Portrait Gallery in London, one can see that Jonson added faux framing features around his sitters to illustrate their trade or importance. Often, this portrait would be accompanied by poetic or explanatory text, such as that of the resulting print by Van Dalen (see fig. 1).

[12] For reproductions of a number of her self-portraits, see Mirjam de Baar et al., eds., *Choosing the Better Part: Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678)*,

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trans. Lynne Richards (Dordrecht, 1996).

[13] See Ger Luijten, "The *Iconography*: Van Dyck's Portraits in Print," in Carl Depauw and Ger Luijten, *Anthony van Dyck as a Printmaker*, trans. Beverly Jackson (New York, 1999), 73–91.

[14] Gustav Waagen, *Treasures of Art in Great Britain: Being an Account of the Chief Collection of Paintings, Drawings, Sculptures, and Illuminated Mss.,* 3 vols. (London, 1854–1857), 2:464.

[15] For a discussion of this print, see Huigen Leeflang et al., *Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617): Drawings, Prints, and Paintings* (Amsterdam, 2003), 65–67, no. 17.

[16] The print is listed in J. F. van Someren, *Beschrijvende catalogus van gegraveerde portretten van Nederlanders*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam, 1888–1891), 3:232, no. 4862; and F. W. H. Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts, ca. 1450–1700*, 71 vols. (Amsterdam, 1949), 5:120, no. 153. The Latin text reads: "Tanta fides caelo, tanta est fiducia, divae / Hoccine Schurmannae vultus in aere micet? / Disce gravis, Sculptor, quae sit vesaniacaepti: / Haec, ais, haec aevi sideris umbra tui est? / Tun' similem praestis aetas cui nulla secundam / Edidit, et non est ulla datura parem? CONSTANTER."

[17] Lievens may have known Jonson through their work in the English court. Both artists also knew Constantijn Huygens, who corresponded frequently with Anna Maria van Schurman (and who was also the subject of a portrait painting by Lievens in 1628–1629). See Hilbert Lootsma, "Tracing a Pose: Govert Flinck and the Emergence of the Van Dyckian Mode of Portraiture in Amsterdam," *Simiolus* 33, no. 4 (2007–2008): 221–236.

[18] This self-portrait, done in pastels on paper, is in 't Coopmanshus, Franeker. It is signed and dated "29 juni 1640 aetatis suae 33" on the verso. For this work, see Mirjam de Baar et al., eds., *Choosing the Better Part: Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678)*, trans. Lynne Richards (Dordrecht, 1996), 42, pl. 5; and Constantijn Huygens, *Gedichten*, 4:310, whose poem is dated April 12, 1661 (reprinted in J. A. Worp, *De gedichten van Constantijn Huygens*, 9 vols. [Groningen, 1892–1899]).

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The painting is on a panel made from a single plank of vertically grained oak.[1] The panel was prepared with a very thin beige ground that leaves the wood clearly visible. The paint layer does not extend to the extreme edges of the support, leaving a 0.5 centimeter border of the beige priming visible. The paint was

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executed entirely in tones of brown. It is thinly applied with loose, sketchy brushstrokes outside the oval border and more highly finished with tight, smoothly blended brushstrokes and glazes in the figure and landscape within the border. There is low impasto in the thicker paint of the cartouche held by the putti. Infrared reflectography at 1.1 to 1.4 microns[2] revealed that the woman's dress originally had a larger collar that was raised above her present proper right shoulder line and covered more of her chest. The X-radiograph suggests that the sitter's head may have been slightly larger originally.

The panel is in plane and in stable condition. The paint layer is not extremely well preserved, containing many tiny losses and areas where the paint is thin enough to make the wood grain visible. Inpainting is visible under ultraviolet light in the sitter's forehead and proper left cheek as well as in the putti. The dark shadows have been reinforced. In 2002 a layer of grime was removed and an additional layer of varnish was applied over the existing one.

[1] The characterization of the wood is based on visual examination only.

[2] Infrared reflectography was performed using a Santa Barbara Focalplane InSb camera fitted with a J astronomy filter.

PROVENANCE

Clement de Jonghe [c. 1624-1677], Amsterdam; (his estate sale, Amsterdam, 15 February 1679 and days following).[1] Jan Six [1618-1700], Amsterdam; (his estate sale, by Jan Pietersz Zomer, Amsterdam, 6 April 1702, no. 111). Joan de Vries; (his sale, The Hague, 13 October 1738, no. 24).[2] Rev. John Fuller Russell [1814-1884], Eagle House, near Enfield, Middlesex, by 1854;[3] (his estate sale, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 18 April 1885, no. 139). Ralph Brocklebank [1840-1921], Haughton Hall, near Tarporley, Cheshire, by 1904;[4] (his estate sale, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 7 July 1922, no. 91). Joseph Fuller Feder [d. 1944], New York; by inheritance to his wife, Edith Mosler Feder [d. 1960], New York; by inheritance to her grandson, Joseph F. McCrindle [1923–2008], New York; gift 2002 to NGA.

[1] Frans Laurentius, *Clement de Jonghe (ca. 1624-1677): KunstverKoper in de*

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Gouden Eeuw, Houten, 2010: 42, 160, 161.

[2] Gerard Hoet, *Catalogus of Naamlyst van Schilderyen…*, The Hague, 1752: 561.

[3] Gustav Waagen, *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*, 3 vols., London, 1854: 2:464.

[4] R. Radcliffe Carter, *Pictures & Engravings at Haughton Hall, Tarporley, in the possession of Ralph Brocklebank*, London, 1904: x, 34, no. 26.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

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