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

Keyser, Thomas de

Dutch, 1596 - 1667

BIOGRAPHY

Thomas de Keyser was the second son of Hendrick de Keyser (1565–1621), famed Dutch architect and master stonemason to the city of Amsterdam, and his wife Beyken (Barbara) van Wildere from Antwerp. The family lived in a house that was part of the municipal stone yard.[1] Thomas and his brothers, Pieter and Willem, were trained by their father in architecture, and each also became a highly regarded master stonemason and stone trader in his own right.[2]

Thomas, however, achieved his greatest prominence as a painter—although little is known about how he received his training. Perhaps taught by Cornelis van der Voort (1576–1624), De Keyser became the preeminent portrait painter of Amsterdam's burgeoning merchant class, at least until the arrival of Rembrandt in Amsterdam in 1631/1632.

De Keyser produced slightly fewer than 100 paintings, the bulk of which he executed between 1624 and 1639. He excelled at life-sized, bust-length portraits, but he also gained renown for his small-scale likenesses. He often depicted individuals in their personal or professional environments, providing the viewer with more information about his subjects, which bridged the fields of portraiture and domestic genre scenes. De Keyser created many of his finest works on copper panels, whose smooth surface allowed him to paint with a great deal of refinement.

De Keyser served as the city of Amsterdam's master stonemason from 1662 until his death in 1667. In this capacity he supervised the construction of the cupola atop the new Town Hall on the Dam square.[3] Apart from a design for a triumphal arch, published in Salomon de Bray's Architectura Moderna (1631), no architectural plans with building designs by De Keyser are known.[4]

[1] Ann Jensen Adams, "The Paintings of Thomas de Keyser (1596/7–1667): A Study of Portraiture in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1985), 18–27.

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

[2] On the training of Pieter and Willem de Keyser and their entry into the St. Luke's Guild, see W. H. F Oldewelt, "Het St. Lucasgilde," Amsterdam Archiefvondsten (Amsterdam, 1942), 91; Ann Jensen Adams, "The Paintings of Thomas de Keyser (1596/7–1667): A Study of Portraiture in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1985), 29.

[3] A. W. Weissman, "Het geslacht De Keyser," *Oud-Holland* 22 (1904): 82; A. W. Weissman, "De Koepeltoren van het Stadhuis te Amsterdam," Amstelodamum Jaarboek 2 (1905): 6; Ann Jensen Adams, "The Paintings of Thomas de Keyser (1596/7–1667): A Study of Portraiture in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1985), 440.

[4] Salomon de Bray, *Architectura moderna ofte bouwinge van onsen tyt* (Amsterdam, 1631), pl. xliiii.

Alexandra Libby

June 21, 2016

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1904 Weissman, A.W. "Het geslacht De Keyser." *Oud Holland* 22 (1904):65-90.

1916 Weissman, A.W. "Een Brief Van Thomas De Keyser." *Oud Holland* 34 (1916): 61-66.

1930 Hofstede de Groot, Cornelis. "Pieter Lastman en Thomas de Keyser." *Oud Holland* 47 (1930): 237-240.

1985 Adams, Ann Jensen. "The Paintings of Thomas de Keyser (1596/7-1667): A Study of Portraiture in Seventeenth-century Amsterdam." 4 vols. in 2. Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1985.

To cite: Alexandra Libby, "Thomas de Keyser," *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century*, NGA Online Editions, http://purl.org/nga/collection/constituent/6017 (accessed December 20, 2016).

© National Gallery of Art, Washington