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Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century

Verspronck, Johannes Cornelisz

Also known as
Sprong, Gerard
Dutch, 1606/1609 - 1662

BIOGRAPHY

The scarcity of documents relating to the life of the portraitist Johannes Cornelisz Verspronck has made securing his date of birth difficult. Though it was long believed that he was born in Haarlem in 1597, recent archival research suggests a date of about a decade later, between 1606 and 1609.[1] Theodorus Schrevelius, the only contemporary author to mention Verspronck, referred to him as Gerard Sprong, thereby contributing to the confusion surrounding the artist's biography.[2] Nonetheless, some facts about Verspronck's life remain clear. He was the son of the Haarlem-born painter Cornelis Engelsz (c. 1575–1650), who had trained with Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem (Dutch, 1562 - 1638) and Karel van Mander I (Netherlandish, 1548 - 1606). Verspronck probably received his first training from his father, though he may have spent a brief period of time in the studio of Frans Hals (Dutch, c. 1582/1583 - 1666). He became a member of the Saint Luke's Guild in Haarlem in 1632, and shortly thereafter, in 1634, produced his first dated painting.

Verspronck never married and lived with his parents for most of his life until he bought a house on the Jansstraat in 1656, where he lived with his brother and sister. Verspronck became quite wealthy as a successful portraitist for Haarlem's patrician families. He also painted group portraits for civic organizations.[3] Even though Verspronck was a Catholic, he obtained commissions from Calvinist, as well as Catholic, patrons.[4] The only portrait for which the price is known is that of the Catholic priest Augustijn Alsthenius Bloemert, Verspronck's last known work, dated 1658, for which he received a payment of 60 guilders.[5] Verspronck died in June 1662 and was buried on June 30 in Haarlem's Saint Bavo Church.

[1] Rudolf E. O. Ekkart, *Johannes Cornelisz. Verspronck: leven en werken van een Haarlems portretschilder uit de 17de eeuw* (Haarlem, 1979), 14–15.

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[2] Theodorus Schrevelius, *Harlemias, of, Eerste stichting der stad Haarlem* (Haarlem, 1648), 382.

[3] Among Verspronck's prominent patrons in Haarlem were the Colterman family, Johan van Schoterbosch, Pieter Jacobsz Schoudt, and Cornelis Montigny de Glarges. See Seymour Slive, ed., *Frans Hals* (London, 1989), 33.

[4] Seymour Slive, ed., *Frans Hals* (London, 1989), 32–33.

[5] Rudolf E. O. Ekkart, J*ohannes Cornelisz. Verspronck: leven en werken van een Haarlems portretschilder uit de 17de eeuw* (Haarlem, 1979), 19, 121, no. 98. The portrait is in the Frans Hals Museum, on loan from the Haarlem Broodkantoor.

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April 24, 2014

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