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Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century

Pierson, Christoffel

Dutch, 1631 - 1714

BIOGRAPHY

Christoffel Pierson was born in The Hague on May 19, 1631, the son of Paulus Pierson, a soldier, and Anneke Abrahams.[1] According to Houbraken, he came from a “good family” and was educated in Latin, French, and the art of drawing.[2] He received his artistic training with Bartholomeus Meyburg (1625–1708/1709), from whom he learned portrait and history painting. In 1652, after his period of training, he moved to Schiedam, where he married Maria Willems. In the following year he went with Meyburg to Germany, where Pierson’s portrait skills were admired by Queen Christina of Sweden, who asked him to work for her.

Pierson declined the Queen’s offer so that he could return to Schiedam to be with his wife and young daughter. In the following year, the young couple moved to Gouda, where they lived until Maria’s death in 1679. Pierson was lieutenant in the Gouda militia company between 1673 and 1676, and served as regent in the house of correction between 1674 and 1680. During these years Pierson was active not only as a portraitist and history and still-life painter but also as a poet, playwright, and translator of Virgil and Racine. In 1674, he received a commission to make copies of seven stained-glass windows from the Sint Janskerk in Gouda.

In 1680, Pierson returned to Schiedam, where he married Joppina Hodenpijl that same year. As he had in Gouda, Pierson served as a member of the town’s militia company. Curiously, he did not join the Schiedam artist’s guild until 1685, even though he had continued to paint during the five years since his arrival. Joppina died in 1687, and three years later Pierson married again, this time to Maria Paeuw. In 1692 Pierson moved back to Gouda, where in 1696 the church fathers commissioned him to oversee the stained-glass windows at the Sint Janskerk. In 1710 Pierson once again became a widower, and, in 1714, at the age of 83, he was buried in the Sint Janskerk.

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[1] This biographical information is taken from the account of J. M. M. Jansen in *Josine Bokhoven, Leven en werk van Christoffel Pierson (1631–1714)*: *"den kloeken rijmer en konstrijken schilder"* (Schiedam, 1986), For further biographical information, see Frederik Daniel Otto Obreen, *Archief voor Nederlandsche Kunstgeschiedenis*, 7 vols. (Rotterdam, 1884–1887), 6:71–74.

[2] Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, 3 vols. (The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1976), 2:259.

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April 24, 2014

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To cite: Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., “Christoffel Pierson,” *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century*, NGA Online Editions, http://purl.org/nga/collection/constituent/6319 (accessed December 20, 2016).

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