

# *Renesse, Constantijn van*

Also known as

Renesse, Constantijn Daniel van

Dutch, 1626 - 1680

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## **BIOGRAPHY**

Constantijn van Renesse was born in Maarsen, near Utrecht, on September 10, 1626. His father, Lodewijk Gerardus van Renesse, a theologian and minister in Maarsen, was a learned man who spoke a number of languages. In 1634 he was appointed military chaplain for Prince Hendrik of Nassau, stadtholder of Friesland, in 1634. In 1638, the year of his wife's death, Lodewijk moved his three sons and daughter to Breda so he could be with the troops during the siege of Breda and help institute the Reformed Church in that area. Shortly after his father's second marriage in 1639, Constantijn enrolled in the University of Leiden, where he studied languages and mathematics.

Constantijn seems to have been skilled as a draughtsman, and apparently began his artistic career in Leiden simultaneously with his studies at the University. Although the nature of his early artistic training is not known, he did study with Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch, 1606 - 1669) in Amsterdam in the late 1640s and early 1650s. A number of drawings of religious subjects from this period survive, some of which Rembrandt appears to have corrected, that demonstrate Van Renesse's ability to assimilate Rembrandt's style. Van Renesse probably assisted Rembrandt in the execution of a number of large-scale religious paintings in the early 1650s (see *The Descent from the Cross*). Van Renesse also learned to make etchings with pronounced chiaroscuro during his apprenticeship with Rembrandt. Among the genre scenes and portraits Van Renesse etched in the early 1650s is a self-portrait dated 1651.

Van Renesse probably had become an independent artist by 1651, when he depicted his father, his siblings, and himself in *Family Concert Party* (Salzburg, Residenzgalerie). His artistic career, however, soon was eclipsed by civic responsibilities. In 1653 he was named town clerk of Eindhoven, probably as a result of the good contacts his father had with the States General, which was intent on placing protestants in important posts in this region of the Netherlands. In the following year he married Christina Drabbe, with whom he had an unknown

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number of children. Although Constantijn's official position, which he kept throughout his life, must have hindered his artistic career, he continued to produce drawings and paintings into the 1660s.

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