

Blockland's death, he returned to Delft and set himself up as a portraitist.

Miereveld registered as a member of the Delft painters' guild in 1587 and served as its *hoofdman* on two occasions, 1589–1590 and 1611–1612. He is not known to have traveled any farther than The Hague, where he worked frequently at the stadholder's court. He was inscribed in that city's Guild of Saint Luke in 1625, but it is not clear whether he ever lived and worked there on a full-time basis. Both his marriages took place in Delft, in 1589 and 1633, and he bought a house there in 1639. He died in that city on 27 June 1641.

Miereveld's work was extremely popular and brought him fame and fortune. At his death, he owned two houses and various pieces of land and belonged "to the wealthiest stratum of the bourgeoisie in Delft."¹ Sandrart claimed that Miereveld painted more than ten thousand portraits. While this figure must be an exaggeration, the artist's oeuvre is indeed very large and is further swelled by numerous repetitions and variations of his compositions executed by pupils and followers. His most notable pupils were Paulus Moreelse (1571–1638) and Anthonie Palamedesz. (1600/1601–1673/1680). His sons Pieter (1596–1623) and Jan (1604–1633) were also portraitists.

Notes

1. Montias 1982, 129.

Bibliography

- Van Mander 1604: 301.
Sandrart 1675 (1925 ed.): 171.
Havard 1894.
Bredius 1908.
Montias 1982.
Haarlem 1986: 131–133.
Brown/MacLaren 1992: 261.

1961.5.4 (1648)

Portrait of a Lady with a Ruff

1638
Oil on oak, 70.5 x 57.8 (27¾ x 22¾)
Gift of the Coe Foundation
(On indefinite loan to the American Embassy, London)

Inscriptions

At right edge below ruff: *AEtatis, 26*
A^o 1638
M. Miereveld

Technical Notes: The cradled support is a single, vertically grained oak board with beveled edges on the reverse. Small checks along the right side follow the grain, and a longer check runs vertically from the bottom edge, right of center. A thin, pale warm brown ground layer was applied, followed by a gray imprimatura under the flesh and ruff.

Paint is applied thinly and smoothly with slightly impasted highlights. Retouching covers scattered small losses and abraded areas of the drapery, flesh, and hair. The background is extensively abraded, particularly at the right. The thick, discolored varnish layer is cloudy and matte in patches.

Provenance: Possibly Collection Van der Bogaerde, 's Hertogenbosch. (Possibly sale, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 23 November 1901, no. 142). (Possibly sale, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 15 December 1902, no. 80). (Eugene Fischhof, Paris, by 1903);¹ Clement Acton Griscom [1841–1912], Philadelphia, in 1903; (sale, Plaza Art Galleries, New York, 26–27 February 1914, no. 11). Coe Foundation, New York.

TODAY, when considering Dutch seventeenth-century portrait traditions, Michiel van Miereveld has the unfortunate distinction of being the foil against which the stylistic innovations of Frans Hals (q.v.) and Rembrandt (q.v.) are placed. Whereas Hals and Rembrandt introduced a sense of movement and psychological penetration into their portraits, Miereveld maintained throughout his long artistic career a preference for formal and formulaic images. In his portraits, whether full length or half length, he excelled in careful descriptions of external features and costume details but, the criticism goes, provided little feeling for life.

While this *Portrait of a Lady with a Ruff* will do little to dispel the general assessment of his work, it nevertheless has a quiet charm in the understated warmth of the woman's gaze. Miereveld, who painted the portrait in 1638 at the twilight of his career, was by this time too set in his ways to break entirely free of the formulas that had earned him accolades for over four decades. The strength of the tradition he followed and the subtle efforts he made to modify them can be seen in a comparable portrait of an admittedly more attractive young woman painted some fourteen years earlier (fig. 1). While the costume and pose are virtually identical, he has created a more three-dimensional image in the later work through the perspective of the collar and stronger modeling of light and dark.

Although minor changes in Miereveld's style can be detected, it is still quite astonishing that he continued to work in this manner through the 1630s, at a period when so much more lively and penetrating images were being created by his younger colleagues in Haarlem and Amsterdam. In large part he must have continued in this vein because he had a market



Fig. 1. Michiel van Miereveld, *Portrait of a Young Woman*, 162(4?), oil on panel, London, Trustees of the Wallace Collection

for such images, clearly a conservative market that still abided by the idea that portraits should describe a sitter's features but not expose much psychological character through gesture or expression. Miereveld's manner of portraiture may also have retained its hold on a Dutch clientele because it reinforced a philosophic ideal that was current in the Netherlands, Neo-Stoicism.² One of the guiding principles of the Neo-Stoic was *tranquillitas*, which was achieved through rational control of inner emotions. Thus, a calm outward demeanor would suggest the sitter's tranquil inner state achieved through rational thought and self-knowledge.

Aristocratic circles in Delft and The Hague, where Miereveld worked throughout his long career, remained conservative long after more dynamic attitudes had affected the upper social strata of Amsterdam and Haarlem. The character of these cities during the 1620s and early 1630s was largely determined by the presence of the House of Orange, whose leader, Willem the Silent, had taken as his motto the Neo-Stoic sentiment *saevis tranquillus in vindis* [calm in the midst of raging seas].³ Miereveld, who worked extensively for the court, not only for

Willem the Silent, but also Prince Maurits (1567–1625) and Prince Frederik Hendrik (1584–1647), was clearly rewarded for the continuity of image he provided, which accorded well with its philosophy of rule.⁴

The other aristocratic sitters who patronized Miereveld, most of whom were from Delft and The Hague, clearly took their lead from the court and eagerly embraced the portrait style it preferred. Although the identity of this sitter is not known, one may judge on the basis of her elaborate costume that she was a wealthy member of society. Her wide, lace-edged ruff, finely fluted lace-edged cuff, and embroidered black garment are remarkable for their craftsmanship and refinement. The elegant embroidery on her stomacher, with its intricate pattern of flowers and birds, may have had some personal significance to the sitter, but the meaning, if it existed, is now lost.⁵ Whether or not this female sitter ever had a male counterpart is not known.

Notes

1. This early provenance information was cited in the 1914 auction catalogue for the Griscom Collection.

2. The concept of Neo-Stoicism has been related to portraiture of this type, although not specifically to Miereveld, by Ann Adams in a lecture presented at the Rembrandt symposium in Amsterdam in 1992, "The Two Faces of Self Knowledge in Rembrandt's Portraits: Neo-Stoic *Tranquillitas* and Calvinist Worldly Activity." I would like to thank Professor Adams for providing me with a transcript of her lecture, which was based on a chapter in her forthcoming book on Dutch portraiture.

3. This motto appears on the verso of a medal struck in his honor in 1568. This reference comes from Ann Adams' lecture (see note 2).

4. No better example of Miereveld's importance as the creator of the image of Frederik Hendrik can be cited than the commission the prince gave to Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641) when this great Flemish painter came to The Hague in the winter of 1631–1632 to paint his portrait. Instead of allowing Van Dyck to come up with his own invention, he was given as a model to follow a painting executed around 1610 by Miereveld (Stadhuis, Delft). See Washington 1990, 238, note 7.

5. For an excellent discussion of period costume, see Bianca M. du Mortier, "Costume in Frans Hals," in Washington 1989b, 45–60.

References

- 1914 Levy, 9: 497.
 1965 NGA: 90, no. 1648.
 1968 NGA: 79, no. 1648, repro.
 1975 NGA: 232–233, repro.
 1985 NGA: 268, repro.
 1989b Washington: 45–60.



Michiel van Miereveld, *Portrait of a Lady with a Ruff*, 1961.5.4