

# JOHNNY VAN HAEFTEN

OLD MASTER PAINTINGS

**BP4921**

**JOB ADRIAENSZ. BERCKHEYDE**

(1630 – Haarlem – 1693)

**A Man reading a Newspaper**

Signed, lower right: *Hiob Berckheyde*  
Oil on panel, 6¾ x 5½ ins. (17 x 14 cm)



**PROVENANCE**

Private collection, Cologne, for three generations, until 2020

The Haarlem painter Job Berckheyde was the elder brother of the well-known townscape painter Gerrit Berckheyde (1638-1698). Although he probably taught Gerrit to paint, the two brothers followed somewhat different artistic paths. Unlike Gerrit, Job did not specialise in architectural painting, but turned his hand to a variety of genres, including cityscapes, still lifes, history paintings, genre scenes and even portraits. The two brothers were evidently close to one another: they travelled together as young artists, and shared the same house in Haarlem, and possibly a studio, for much of their adult lives. However, they seem to have had very different personalities which are reflected in their art. The artists' biographer Arnold Houbraken characterised Job as ambitious and impulsive, while Gerrit was modest and meticulous<sup>i</sup>.

Job painted relatively few scenes of everyday life, but they are among his best works. In this little masterpiece, the artist has depicted a bearded and bespectacled, middle-aged man, seen in profile against a neutral background. He is seated on a simple wooden chair, apparently reading aloud from the newspaper. He is wearing a tattered, old, buff-coloured coat and a black hat: the coat is very much the worse for wear, with patches and frayed cuffs, and open seams on the shoulder and round the armhole. One of his elbows rests on a small table upon which lies an open almanac, together with a small dark object which might be a spectacle case. The figure is painted with great sensitivity: the whole is rendered in a palette of subtle greys, browns, beige and black.

For all its simplicity and modest size, the picture attains a certain monumentality. The composition has been pared down to the bare essentials, thus focusing our attention on the man – his scruffy beard, the gold-rimmed glasses, the tatty clothing. Although conceived as a scene of daily life, not a portrait, the man depicted is strongly individualised and one senses that he was well known to the artist. Interestingly, the same model seems to have been used for the messenger who appears, almost identically dressed – in a similar buff coat, with a pocket in the side seam and buttons down the front, white necktie and black hat - in Berckheyde's painting of an *Office of a Notary Public*, dated 1672, in a private collection (fig. 1). The present painting probably dates from around the same time.

The man in the picture may well be reading a copy of the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*<sup>ii</sup>, the most popular newspaper of the day. The man responsible for the creation of the first Haarlem newspaper was the Mennonite printer and newspaper publisher Abraham Casteleyn (1628-1681). Beginning in 1656, under the title *Weeckelycke Courante van Europa* ('Weekly Newspaper of Europe'), the paper was issued weekly on Saturday. It was soon sufficiently successful for Casteleyn to publish a Tuesday edition as well. After several changes of name, the two editions were eventually incorporated into the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* ('True Newspaper for Haarlem'). The paper, published as a double-sided half-sheet folio with a simple clear heading, quickly gained a reputation as one of the best-informed newspapers in Europe. Numerous copies of the seventeenth-century paper have survived in archives and libraries around the world (fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Job Berckheyde  
*Office of a Notary Public*, 1672.  
Oil on canvas, 1672, private  
Collection.



Fig. 2. *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*  
(no. 31), Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1667  
Rijksmuseum, object no. NG-2014-8.

## BIOGRAPHY

The son of the Haarlem butcher Adriaen Joppen Berckheyde and his wife Cornelia Gerritsdr. Pancier, Job Adriaensz. Berckheyde was baptised in the Reformed Church in Haarlem on 27 January 1630. The family name is derived from the polder Berckheyden near Katwijk aan de Rijn from whence Adriaen Joppen originally came. Job was the eldest son of seven children baptised in the Reformed Church, of whom five survived, including a brother, Gerrit (1638-1698), who was eight years his junior and also became a painter. According to the artist's biographer Arnold Houbraken, Job was first apprenticed to a bookbinder, but soon switched to painting, becoming a pupil of the landscape and history painter Jacob de Wet (c. 1610-1691) in 1644. He subsequently spent some time in Amsterdam, before returning to Haarlem and establishing himself as an independent painter on the Grote Markt. In March 1654 he paid his entry fee to the Haarlem guild. Sometime in the second half of the 1650s (before 1660 when Gerrit joined the Haarlem Guild of St. Luke), Job and his brother Gerrit, who he probably taught to paint, made a trip to Germany along the Rhine, visiting Emmerich, Kleve and Cologne, where they stayed for an extended period. From Cologne the brothers travelled further up the Rhine to Bonn, Mainz, Mannheim and finally to Heidelberg, where they found employment as court painters to Karl-Ludwig, Elector of the Palatinate, and were rewarded with a variety of honours, including gold medallions, such as that worn by Job in his self-portrait in the Frans Hals Museum (Fig. 3).

After returning to Haarlem, the two brothers shared a house with one of their unmarried sisters, possibly Aegje, in the Sint-Jansstraat, close to the Grote Markt. According to Houbraken, neither brother ever married. In addition to his artistic activities, Job was a member of the Haarlem chamber of rhetoric *De Wijngaardranken* (The Vine Branch) from

1666-1682, for which he held a variety of administrative positions, including those of chairman, dean and councillor, and factor (chief poet). However, no literary work by him is known today. In May 1680, Job acted as an appraiser for the sale of the Van der Meulen collection in Amsterdam. In January 1682, he was appointed as warden of the Guild of St. Luke in Haarlem, but according to the minute books he seems to have rarely attended its meetings. Job may have left for Amsterdam around this time. He is recorded as being a member of the Amsterdam Guild of St. Luke in November 1685, and his name appears again as a member there in 1688. He may have remained there until his death, however, he was buried in Haarlem in the St. Janskerk on 27 November 1693 from a house in the St. Jansstraat near the Herenstraat<sup>iii</sup>.



Fig. 3. Job Berckheyde, *Self-portrait*.  
Oil on panel, 52 x 40 cm  
Frans Halsmuseum, inv. no. OS1-14

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<sup>i</sup> Information taken from Van der Willigen/De Kinkelder (typescript 1993/1998) in the biographical details on the artist held in the RKD, Netherlands Institute for Art History, The Hague.

<sup>ii</sup> We are grateful to Dr. Fred G. Meijer for pointing this out.

<sup>iii</sup> Biographical information taken from P. Biesboer, *et. al.*, *Painting in Haarlem 1500-1850: The collection of the Frans Hals Museum*, 2006, pp. 106-108.