

# JOHNNY VAN HAEFTEN

OLD MASTER PAINTINGS

## **GERARD TERBORCH**

(Zwolle 1617 – 1681 Deventer)

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### The Card Players

On canvas, laid down on panel – 18 ¾ x 14 ½ in. (46.7 x 36.8 cm)

#### Provenance:

G. Braamcamp (1699-1771), Amsterdam, acquired 1752  
His sale, Amsterdam, July 31, 1771, lot 41, for 305 guilders,  
to Maclaine

With Cornelis Ploos van Amstel (1726-1798), Amsterdam  
His sale, Amsterdam, Philippe van der Schley, March 3, 1800  
and days following, lot 1, for 610 guilders, to Jan Yver, for  
Pieter van Winter

Pieter van Winter Nicolaas Simonsz. (1745-1807),  
Amsterdam

Thence by descent to his younger daughter Anna Louisa  
Agatha van Loon-van Winter (1793-1877), Amsterdam  
Acquired as part of the entire Van Loon collection by  
Alphonse, Gustave, Edmond, Lionel and Ferdinand de  
Rothschild acting in syndicate, 1877 and allocated by the  
syndicate to Baron Lionel de Rothschild, London  
Baron Alfred de Rothschild, London, by inheritance, 1882  
Arthur Sanderson, Edinburgh, by 1900

With Thomas Lawrie and Co., London, by 1903

John W. Simpson, New York, bought March 1905

With P. & D. Colnaghi, London

With M. Knoedler & Co., Inc., London, by whom sold  
November 1908 for £9,000 to Kappel

Marcus Kappel, Berlin, by whom sold in 1914 to Caspari  
With Caspari Galerie, Munich, by whom sold in March 1928  
to Knoedler  
With M. Knoedler & Co., Inc., New York, by whom sold  
September 1928 to Balch  
Allan C. Balch, Los Angeles  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Allan C. Balch to the Los Angeles  
County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, 1944, (acc. no.  
M.44.2.7)  
De-accessioned 2009

Exhibited:

Amsterdam, 1867, no. 194  
London, Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1900, no. 4, as property  
of Arthur Sanderson  
London, Thomas Lawrie & Co., 1903, no. 19  
Berlin, 1914, no. 168  
Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum, *The Balch  
Collection and Old Masters from Los Angeles Collections*,  
March 26-April 30, 1944, no. 46  
Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, July 25-  
September 18, 1951  
Pomona, Los Angeles County Fair Association, 1951  
Dallas, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, *World Art Exhibition:  
The Art of Man*, September 24-November 21, 1962  
La Jolla, La Jolla Museum of Art, *Dutch and Flemish  
Paintings of the Northern Renaissance*, June 13-September  
20, 1964, no. 35

Literature:

G. Hoet, *Catalogue of Naamlyst van Schilderyen met  
derzelver Pryzen*, 1752, vol. II, no. 503  
J. Smith, *Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most  
Eminent Dutch and Flemish Painters*, vol. IV, 1833, pp. 135-  
36, no. 58  
J. Smith, *Supplement to the Catalogue Raisonné of the Works  
of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish and French Painters*,  
London 1842, p. 534, no. 19  
C. Davis, *A Description of the Works of Art Forming the  
Collection of Alfred de Rothschild*, 1884, no. 32  
C. Hofstede de Groot, *Catalogue of the Dutch Painters*,  
London 1913, vol. V, p.42, no. 111 and p. 43, no. 114  
W. von Bode, *Die Gemäldesammlung Marcus Kappel in  
Berlin*, Berlin 1914, no. 33  
E. Plietsch, *Gerard Ter Borch*, Vienna 1944, p. 22

R. McKinney, "Old Masters from the Balch Collection," in *Los Angeles County Museum of Art Quarterly*, Spring and Summer 1944, vol. 4, nos. 1 and 2, p. 10

R. McKinney, "The Balch Art: Rich Gift for California," *Art News*, vol. 43, December 15, 1944, p. 11

*Los Angeles County Museum of Art Quarterly*, Fall and Winter, 1945, vol. 4, nos. 3 and 4, p. 10

*Catalogue of the Balch Collection and Old Masters from Los Angeles Collections*, Los Angeles County Museum, 1954, no. 57, p. 53

P. Wescher and E. Feinblatt, *Los Angeles County Museum, Catalogue of Paintings II: A Catalogue of Flemish, German, Dutch and English Paintings, XV-XVII Century*, Los Angeles 1954, p. 53, no. 57, reproduced

"Paintings in Los Angeles," *Connoisseur*, May 1955, p. 216

S.J. Gudlaugsson, *Gerard Ter Borch*, The Hague 1959, vol. I, p. 125 and vol. II, pp. 157-58, no. 145 and reproduced p.302

*Los Angeles County Museum of Art Handbook*, Los Angeles 1977, p. 88

T. Laurentius *et al*, *Cornelis Ploos van Amstel 1726-1798. Kunstverzamelier en printuitgever*, Assen 1980, pp. 45 and 51, reproduced p. 47

P. Sutton, *A Guide to Dutch Art in America*, Grand Rapids and Kampen 1986, p. 133

J. Lloyd Williams, *Dutch Art and Scotland, A Reflection of Taste*, Edinburgh 1992, p. 170

R. Priem, "The 'most excellent collection' of Lucretia Johanna van Winter: the years 1809-22", in *Simiolus*, vol. 25, 197, no. 2/3, pp. 118 and 218, reproduced fig. 25

*At the Museum*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, November 1998, p. 6 and 7, reproduced

Three elegantly dressed figures are seated round a table. The two young ladies are playing cards, while the gentleman, who wears a broad-brimmed hat and a fine black costume, trimmed with gold thread, advises his companion. The young woman viewed from behind is dressed in a pink bodice and a gleaming, white satin skirt. Her sensuous neck and bare shoulders are beautifully set off by her soft ringlets and fur stole. Her adversary, seated opposite, is clad in a fashionable, low-cut, grey and blue satin gown, trimmed with gold braid: a string of pearls encircles her neck and a dainty foot rests on a foot-warmer. A few cards lie discarded on the table beside a silver tray, on which three coins appear: next to it are a bottle and a glass of wine. The room is furnished in an elegant, but understated manner: a picture in a gilded frame hangs on the left, while a large map is displayed on the back wall.

This exquisitely refined painting is characteristic of the type of high-life genre scene which Gerard Terborch brought to perfection in the late 1650s and early 1660s. At the beginning of his career Terborch had painted guardroom scenes in the manner of Pieter Codde and Willem Duyster, but after the signing of the Treaty of Munster in 1648, which brought to a close the long war with Spain, he seems to have recognised that pictures of soldiering were no longer topical and turned his attention instead to themes from domestic life. In the years that followed, Terborch developed a new kind of genre painting that focused on a few elegantly dressed figures in an upright format. By now, Terborch was living once again at home in Zwolle, with his father and stepmother, Wiesken Matthys, and various siblings. Many of his paintings from this period depict intimate scenes of upper middle class life, in which members of his own family, particularly his half-sister Gesina, often serve as models. In 1654, Terborch married his stepmother's sister, Geertruyt Matthys and moved to nearby Deventer. The move to Deventer marks a change in the character of the artist's genre pieces, which now take on a new elegance and sophistication. His attention now focuses on beautiful young people, who move in fashionable social circles and engage in genteel pastimes. Such scenes no doubt reflect to some extent the ideals of the wealthy patrician class to which the artist himself belonged.

Gudlaugsson dates the present painting to around 1659<sup>i</sup>, when the artist was at the height of his powers. The elegant simplicity of the composition, the delicacy of the brushwork and the subtlety of the psychological observation are typical of this period. The three figures, seen from a close vantage point, appear compactly disposed around the table. A bright, diffuse light falls upon the scene, recording every shimmering fold of the ladies' silken gowns, whilst leaving relatively undefined the somewhat sparse interior. The care lavished on the costly fabrics and such details as the intricate gold embroidery on the costumes, the women's softly curled ringlets and the still life on the table, epitomises the artist's meticulous degree of finish. In his day, Terborch's ability to recreate the reflective surface of satin was greatly admired by artists and connoisseurs alike and, although he had many emulators, his brilliance in this respect has never been surpassed.

The artist's great fame rests chiefly on his genre paintings of this type, which did much to define the subjects and pictorial schemes used by other artists of his generation and later.

Card games were a popular theme in Dutch seventeenth-century art, but interpretations varied. Some representations of card players emphasise the idleness of the pastime, or the stupidity or untrustworthiness of the participants. In others, games of cards provide the scenario for an amorous dalliance between the sexes and in such scenes the ace of hearts often functions as a symbol of romance. In Terborch's oeuvre, however, the subject is not common, although he addressed it once before in a painting of around 1650<sup>ii</sup>. The latter is smaller in scale than the present painting and also portrays three protagonists: this time, two gentlemen and one lady, but the figures are dressed more simply and appear in a more modest setting. The arrangement of figures is reversed, so that the seated lady in the foreground, seen from behind, is advised by a gentleman who stands beside her, while her male opponent sits on the opposite side of the table. In both of Terborch's paintings of this subject, the narrative is suggested through subtly nuanced gestures and glances, but neither expresses an obvious moralising message, or conveys overtly amorous overtones. Rather the theme seems to offer Terborch the opportunity to explore his interest in human emotions and behaviour. Indeed, it satisfies perfectly his preference for subjects that allowed him to portray reserved figures caught in contemplative states of mind.

Our painting conveys a mood of stillness and calm. All three figures are absorbed in the game, their eyes cast down. The lady seated in the foreground appears both physically and emotionally detached, her chair pulled slightly back from the table and, whilst we are privy to the contents of her hand, her face is hidden from our view. The body language of the couple on the opposite side of the table, on the other hand, suggests a certain intimacy: she inclines inwards towards her beau, while his arm disappears mysteriously behind her back. Her face is plainly visible, but her self-contained expression offers no clues as to her inner thoughts or emotions and the contents of her hand are concealed. The coins lying on the silver tray suggest that they are playing for money, but the scene appears to be one of complete decorum. As is so often the case with Terborch, we are left wondering whether there is a deeper significance here, or what the possible outcome might be.

Born in Zwolle, in 1617, into a distinguished family, Gerard Terborch was the only son of Gerard Terborch the Elder's first marriage. His mother, Anna Bufkens died in 1621. Gerard was encouraged to draw from a very early age by his father, who had himself trained as an artist and made an extended visit to Italy in his youth. Terborch was in Amsterdam in 1632, but back again in Zwolle the following year, before departing again for Haarlem in 1634 to study with the landscapist Pieter Molijn. He joined the Haarlem guild in 1635. In July that year he travelled to London to work with his uncle, the copper-engraver Robert van Voerst. According to Arnold Houbraken, after returning to Zwolle in 1636, the artist travelled to Germany, Italy, France, Spain and the southern Netherlands. By 1646, he was in Münster in Westphalia, where he painted miniatures and a group portrait of the delegates to the peace negotiations between Spain and the Netherlands. In 1653, he signed a document in Delft with the young Johannes Vermeer.

The following year he married Geertruyt Matthijs and settled permanently in Deventer in the eastern province of Overijssel. Nonetheless, he maintained close contact with his native Zwolle. From the late 1640s onwards, his half-sister and half-brother, Gesina and Moses, as well as other members of his family served frequently as models for his paintings. In 1655, he became a citizen of Deventer and was appointed common councillor (*gemeensman*) in 1656. Following the death of his wife, Terborch was in Amsterdam in 1674 and in The Hague and Haarlem in 1675. He died in Deventer on 8 December 1681.

P.M.

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<sup>i</sup> See: S. J. Gudlaugsson, *Gerard Ter Borch*, The Hague, 1959, vol. II, pp. 157-158, no. 145.

<sup>ii</sup> Gerard Terborch, *A Lady and two Gentlemen playing Cards*, panel, 25.5 x 20 cm, collection of Dr. O. Reinhart, Winterthur. S. J. Gudlaugsson, *Ibid.*, p. 90, no. 70, illustrated plate 70.