

# JOHNNY VAN HAEFTEN

OLD MASTER PAINTINGS

**VP4879**

**HENDRICK VERSCHURING**

(Gorinchem 1627 – 1690 Dordrecht)

**A Portrait of a young Man, seated, holding a Flute**

Signed and dated on the right: *H. Verschuring. f./Anno 1654*  
Oil on copper, 8 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 7 $\frac{1}{4}$  ins. (22.7 x 18.5 cm)



**PROVENANCE**

Private collection, Würzburg, Germany, until 2018

A native of Gorinchem (also known as Gorkum), Hendrick Verschuring became a pupil of the Utrecht landscape painter Jan Both (c. 1615-1652). Like his master he travelled to Rome, where he remained for some eight to ten years, before returning home. He spent the rest of his life in Gorinchem, where he worked as a painter, and was also active in local municipal affairs, eventually becoming burgomaster of Gorinchem.

Verschuring's experience of Italy, especially the southern light and landscape, is reflected in his paintings. He also took inspiration from the work of the Haarlem painter Philips Wouwerman (1619-1668). Like Wouwerman, he specialised in Italianate landscapes, with elegant companies on horseback, parties setting out for the chase, or resting with hounds, riding schools and cavalry skirmishes. In addition, he produced a small number of small-scale portraits.

This small, informal likeness of a fresh-faced young man exemplifies Verschuring's intimate style of portraiture. The sitter is portrayed three-quarter length, seated on a chair against a plain background. One of his hands is propped casually on his hip, while the other, holding a flute, rests on a table, covered with a red cloth. He is dressed in a grey doublet and cloak, salmon-pink hose, and calf-length boots. At his neck he wears a flat white collar, tied with tasselled bandstrings, and beneath his doublet, a white undershirt with voluminous sleeves and diaphanous cuffs, tied at the wrist with a red ribbon. Two volumes rest on the table beside him. The fluid manner of painting is characteristic of the artist.

The identity of the sitter is not known, but he looks to have been in his late teens at the time he sat to Verschuring. It seems likely that the fashionably dressed young man came from a well-to-do family in or near Gorinchem, since Verschuring resided there for most of his working life following his return from Italy around 1652.

Situated on the River Merwede, close to the boundaries of the provinces of Holland, Gelderland and Brabant, Gorinchem became a prosperous trading centre in the seventeenth century. A surprising number of artists were born there, Abraham Bloemaert (1566-1651), Cornelis Saftleven (1607-1681), Aert van de Neer (c. 1603/4-1677), and Jan van der Heyden (1637-1712) to name but a few, however, most of them moved away to pursue their careers in major artistic centres. Hendrick Verschuring was one of the few who remained in his hometown.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Hendrick Verschuring was baptised in Gorinchem (Gorkum) on 2 November 1627. He became a pupil of the local portrait painter Dirck Govertsz. (1574/76-1646/47) at the age of eight, before going on to study with the Italianate landscapist Jan Both in Utrecht. He travelled to Rome in 1646, remaining there until 1651. On his way home he stopped in Paris where he met the young Dutchman Joan Huydecoper II, son of the burgomaster of Maarsseveen, who was setting off on his Grand Tour of Italy. Huydecoper apparently persuaded the artist to return with him to Italy to act as his guide. He therefore spent a further period of time in Italy before finally making his way home. There are conflicting accounts as to the length of time he spent in Italy, but he must have been back in Gorinchem by the time he registered as a

member of the city's Reformed Church on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 1652 and he also joined the Gorkum Brotherhood of Romans that same year. In 1657, he married for the first time and, in 1660, a son, Willem, who also became a painter, was born. Verschuring married for the second time in 1674. He was the teacher of his son Willem Verschuring (1660-1726) and Mattheus Wijtmans (1650-1689). Verschuring was not only a painter, but also played an active role in local government, becoming a member of the city council in 1672, and later burgomaster of Gorinchem. In 1690, while on his way to Rotterdam, he drowned in the River Merwede, near Dordrecht.

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<sup>i</sup> According to the Frenchman Roger de Piles, he stayed in Italy for eight years, while his son Willem maintained that he spent ten years there. However, according to F. Tissing & H. F. de Wit in *Gorcumse Schilders in de Gouden Eeuw*, 1987, he spent only five years in Italy.