

Genre-Portraits and Market Value: Emanuel de Witte's *Portrait of Adriana van Heusden and Her Daughter at the New Amsterdam Fishmarket, 1661-63*

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Emanuel de Witte's *Portrait of Adriana van Heusden and Her Daughter at the New Amsterdam Fishmarket* (Figure 1) painted between 1661-1663, depicts a well-dressed woman with her young child shopping in a busy market setting. The two figures stand before a covered stall laden with a sumptuous variety of fish, displayed by a market seller who attentively waits on her customer. The painting of Adriana van Heusden and her daughter is one of a small but significant number of genre-portraits produced in the Netherlands during the seventeenth century. Genre-portraits are images that combine portraits of sitters with a quotidian scene of everyday life.¹ They are distinct from typical modes of Dutch portraiture, such as Govert Flück's *Portrait of a Woman*, 1658, because they do not conform to prescribed portrait conventions. This visual conflation results in more casual and yet complex pictorial constructions of portraiture that are informed by, but not restricted to, traditional themes in genre painting; the genre settings chosen, for instance, are individual to each sitter. The *Portrait of Adriana van Heusden and Her Daughter at the New Amsterdam Fishmarket* locates the sitters within a popular type of seventeenth-century genre painting of a market scene, instead of a more traditional, formal portraiture format.

This essay will address problematic issues of interpretation and meaning that arise when looking at a work that references multiple pictorial categories that are often treated by scholars of Dutch art as distinct and self-contained. Why would this patron presumably desire her portrait to be set into a common public venue such as a marketplace? Why would an artist choose the particular pictorial category of a market scene as a vehicle for portraiture? For all the intriguing interpretive possibilities the genre-portrait of Adriana van Heusden offers, it has generally been regarded as an image closely tied to seventeenth-century moralizing texts related to feminine virtue and has not been addressed in any further depth. This paper will broaden the iconographic and iconological discourse on the painting by proposing how this specific pictorial juxtapo-

sition of a portrait within a market scene may have fashioned identities for both patron and artist. By examining de Witte's oeuvre, the larger scope of seventeenth-century Dutch market pictures and portrait traditions, as well as the extraordinary circumstances of patronage surrounding the painting, this interpretation will reveal more multivalent aspects of the picture as an image that was highly valued by both patron and artist as an example of their respective aesthetic tastes and abilities as collector and creator.

The question of identity concerning the sitters in the genre-portrait has revealed rather unusual patronage issues surrounding this particular work. The painting is neither signed nor dated, but legal documents and inventories have provided evidence that the adult sitter is Adriana van Heusden, wife of Joris de Wijs, an Amsterdam notary.² Around 1658, Emanuel de Witte contracted an exchange agreement with de Wijs in which de Witte received food, lodging and eight hundred guilders per year, a substantial sum, in exchange for all the pictures he painted while living in the de Wijs home.³ During that time, Emanuel de Witte painted the *Portrait of Adriana van Heusden and Her Daughter*, a highly unusual picture within the scope of the artist's own work and within Dutch portraiture.

Primarily known as a genre painter, Emanuel de Witte's portraits are few in number, but diverse in format. *Adriana van Heusden and her Daughter at the New Amsterdam Fishmarket* is only one of three known portraits by the artist and it is his only genre-portrait. One pendant portrait pair of unidentified sitters from 1648 (Rotterdam, Museum Boymans van Beuningen) is attributed to de Witte. De Witte's *Portrait of a Family*, 1678, renders an unidentified Dutch father, mother and daughter placed within a domestic interior.⁴ In contrast, the painting of Adriana van Heusden and her daughter is a striking departure from these more conventional examples of de Witte's portraiture. The a well-appointed room and richly dressed sitters seen in *Portrait of a Family* follows prescribed

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¹ Little has been written on genre-portraiture as a phenomenon in seventeenth-century Dutch art. See, for example, Lyckle de Vries, "Portraits of People at Work," *Werk: Opstellen voor Hans Locher*, J. Locher and Jan van Jong, eds. (Groningen: Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 1990).

² Neil MacLaren, *The Dutch School* (London: Publications Department, The National Gallery, 1960) 461.

³ MacLaren 460.

⁴ A similar work in composition, setting and pose, was painted by Gabriel Metsu entitled, *Family of Burgermeister Valckenier*, 1657, (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) suggesting artistic exchange between the two artists. See Franklin Robinson, *Gabriel Metsu: A Study of His Place in Dutch Genre Painting of the Golden Age* (New York: A. Schram, 1974).

Dutch family portrait conventions in addition to hierarchical composition, static pose and formal costuming. Adriana, however, is active and dynamic, operating within the public sphere, rather than within a domestic interior. The formal, idealized setting that most often encloses the sitters within a private, often intimate and familial framework is absent here, replaced by a lively market scene.

De Witte's use of a market context as a vehicle for seventeenth-century Dutch portraiture is unprecedented, and is typical of the highly specialized genre settings used in genre-portraits. Only Jacob Gerritszoon Cuyp's *Fish Seller*, 1627 (Figure 2) represents another fish market scene containing a possible portrait. Ostensibly, a self-portrait of the artist is believed to be in the right background, though there is no confirmation of the identity of this figure. It was not until de Witte moved to Amsterdam in 1652, that market scenes became a prominent theme in the artist's oeuvre.⁵ De Witte's decision to combine the portraits of Adriana van Heusden and her daughter within a fish market scene reflects the artist's burgeoning interest in the theme of market paintings, which continued throughout the 1670s.⁶ As a large, populous and urban area, Amsterdam held extensive markets in prescribed areas of the city during certain days of the week, each specialized to sell specific goods. The fish markets were of particular interest to de Witte; of nine market paintings attributed to him, seven are fish markets.⁷

De Witte's acute interest in market subjects reflects a pervasive mid-century trend, when these types of genre scenes experienced a surge of popularity in the Netherlands.⁸ Market pictures were executed by a large number of artists, including Gabriel Metsu, Quiringh van Brekelenkam and Hendrik Sorgh, among others. A distinctive feature of these pictures in Dutch art is the many variations on the marketplace theme. Because markets themselves were restricted to the sale of certain wares, market scenes are almost always dedicated to a particular type of product for sale. A 1663 account of Amsterdam's markets by Olfert Dapper in his *Historical Description of Amsterdam* (*Historische Beschrijving der stad Amsterdam*) lists markets for vegetables, fruit, meat, fish, poultry and even non-edible goods such as clothes and metal containers.⁹ Considering the

numerous markets in Amsterdam at mid-century, not all markets were captured in genre scenes. For example, there are no pictures of the Amsterdam butter markets or cheese markets, both connected to the highly important and rapidly expanding dairy industries of the mid-century Netherlands.¹⁰ The privileging of certain markets in paintings indicates that fish markets may have had a wider resonance within Dutch culture than other excluded market scenes. As Linda Stone-Ferrier has observed, each type of market scene is imbued with "idiosyncratic" visual and iconological information inherent to that subject.¹¹ For the genre-portrait of Adriana van Heusden, we shall see that the fish market context was chosen for the inherent qualities of its iconography to communicate the respective talents and skills of the sitter and the artist to the viewer.

Interpretations of the *Portrait of Adriana van Heusden and Her Daughter* have selectively concentrated on the image as one extolling Adriana's virtue as a capable mother and wife. Both Lyckle de Vries and Wayne Franits have viewed the picture through the prism of conduct manuals for women and have tied it closely to popular seventeenth-century moralizing texts. De Vries discusses the painting as a narrative borrowed from an anecdote by popular moralist Jacob Cats, relating the story of a housewife who skillfully shops at the market to procure good food at the best prices for her family.¹² Franits also places de Witte's genre-portrait within a narrative context, associating it with the "virtue and prudence" of careful housewives represented in Cats' 1625 treatise *Houwelyck* (Marriage). Cats' marriage manual put forth the ideal model for a modern Dutch household and clearly outlined roles for all its members. Simon Schama observes that part of a well-run home in the seventeenth-century Netherlands included a properly supplied table, a duty that was the sole responsibility of the wife to oversee and manage.¹³ Adriana thus is seen fulfilling her role as responsible *huishouder*.¹⁴

This essay contends that the painting's fish market context was chosen as a format for Adriana van Heusden's portrait because it was a genre scene that associated the subject, or in Adriana's case, the sitter, with the concept of *verkiezing*, or the ability to discriminate well in choosing. *Verkiezing* is also applied to aesthetic judgment in creating works of art

⁵ Born in Alkmaar, de Witte moved frequently during his career, first to Rotterdam in 1636 and then Delft in 1641. In 1652, de Witte moved to Amsterdam, and stayed there until his death in 1691/92.

⁶ Friso Lammertse, *Dutch Genre Paintings of the Seventeenth Century, Collection of the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen* (Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, 1998) 201; Ilse Manke chronologically places the Van Heusden portrait as the first of the artist's market scenes, though some are undated. Ilse Manke, *Emanuel de Witte, 1617-1692* (Amsterdam: M. Hertzberger, 1963).

⁷ The only monograph on de Witte, by Ilse Manke, lists nine market scenes that are attributed to him. Ilse Manke *Emanuel de Witte, 1617-1692* (Amsterdam: M. Hertzberger, 1963); Ivan Gaskell, *Seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish painting* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers for Sotheby's Publications, 1990) cat. 61.

⁸ Gaskell cat. 61; Linda Stone-Ferrier, "Gabriel Metsu's Vegetable Market at Amsterdam: Seventeenth-century Dutch Market Paintings and Horticulture," *Art Bulletin* 71 (1989): 428.

⁹ Dapper's discussion of markets is cited in Stone-Ferrier 440.

¹⁰ Jan de Vries, *The Dutch rural economy in the Golden Age, 1500-1700* (New Haven, Yale UP, 1974) 143-44.

¹¹ Stone-Ferrier 428-30.

¹² De Vries (1990) 56.

¹³ Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York: Knopf, 1987) 423.

¹⁴ De Vries (1990) 56.

and is discussed in Gerard de Lairese's *Groot Schilderboek* (Great Book of Painting), 1707, a theoretical treatise produced at the end of the artist's career explicating artistic practices and ideals that would have been familiar to Dutch artists of the second half of the seventeenth century. In his text, de Lairese advises artists on the defining elements that make a successful still life:

But we must know, in the first place, what constitutes a good still life piece, since, though it is naturally penciled, nothing but a good choice [*verkiezing*] can charm the senses and bring fame to the master... My opinion is, that the beauty and goodness of a still life consists only in the most choice objects: I say the most choice; as among flowers, the most rare and beautiful, and the same in the fruits and other things. These will gain the master credit, especially with the addition of some particular significations proper to them.¹⁵

Adriana's gesture draws attention to the still life display in de Witte's genre-portrait, which appears to be the focus of the picture. Franits notes that "The luminous, wet sheen of the fish is rendered so vividly that it inadvertently detracts from the portrait of the woman and her child."¹⁶ Directing the viewer's gaze to the fish, which occupy the foreground plane closest to the viewer, is neither incidental nor inadvertent, for we are intended to recognize the *verkiezing* of de Witte who has followed the approach described later by de Lairese and has emphasized the "most choice objects...the most rare and beautiful..." The intent, certainly, is as de Lairese advises, to "gain the master credit, especially with the addition of some particular significations proper to them." These are revealed as de Witte's reconstruction of a genre *topos* into a specific reference to the superior taste of his client, Adriana. Evidence of excellent taste is manifested by *verkiezing*: her knowledge and care in choosing the best product—in shopping, as well as the choice of skilled painter, is represented by de Witte's rendering of the fish still life, which is the most carefully and elaborately executed portion of the painting.

It appears that in the case of some market paintings, and fish markets in particular, that the quality of *verkiezing* applies not only to the artist's skill, but is a central theme revolving around the aesthetic ability of the patron as well. The term *verkiezing* means "choosing," but de Lairese uses it in the context of an ability to discriminate between objects for quality, choosing only the most aesthetically pleasing with the intent of the work reflecting the taste, and thus the talent, of the painter. According to de Lairese's text, it is the artist's skilled choice in rendering the proper object in the correct

manner with the requisite meaning that makes a painting successful, all efforts directed toward the goal of increasing celebrity.

In fish markets, figures are often engaged in a limited range of poses, repeated within this type of scene. The buyer, who is with few exceptions a woman, peruses goods for sale, actively chooses a product or pays for a purchase. It is only in fish market scenes, within market pictures in general, that the rhetorical gesture of pointing is used as a consistent visual trope. Besides Adriana's genre-portrait, a further example of a fish market scene employing this visual cue is represented by Adriaen van Utrecht's *Fishmarket* (Figure 3). In van Utrecht's picture, an elegantly dressed buyer examines still life displays, and is shown choosing the best wares with a simple pointing gesture. De Witte's combination of portrait with a fish market scene provides the opportunity for Adriana to distinguish herself through the act of choosing, and creates a strong visual impression of the buyer's powers of discernment and selection.

As part of these allusions to choice and taste, figures who are purchasing goods in fish market scenes are often well-dressed, separating them from the rougher salesfolk and placing them in a more elevated social stratum. In addition to the women in Adriaen van Utrecht's representative market scenes, Jacob Gerritszoon Cuyp's *Fish Seller* (Figure 2) presents the viewer with three monumental figures in the foreground: the two women are differentiated by costume. The purchaser wears a black cloak indicative of her more elevated burgher status while the maid wears a simpler garment, carries a pail and looks directly at the viewer. The purchaser does not acknowledge the viewer, she is fully occupied with her task as she points with one hand to the piece of fish, having given her coins to the seller.

Perhaps the most direct picture of this type to self-consciously acknowledge *verkiezing* is H. Coveyn's *Woman Inspecting Fish* (Figure 4). Here, the respectable buyer does not point directly, but demonstrates interest with a monocle, through which she closely examines the catch in order to make the appropriate selection. It is the fishwife who looks directly at the viewer with a smile of complicity as *she* points to the customer in recognition of *verkiezing*, the housewife with discriminating taste. This self-reflexive image implies a binary recognition of the connoisseurship abilities of both the viewer of the painting, who appreciates the carefully rendered surface of the fish still life, and the woman wisely purchasing goods of a high quality.

The portrait of Adriana van Heusden borrows from this tradition emphasizing *verkiezing*, as she indicates her choice to the fishwife, an action that seems clearer and more decisive than Franits' description of this as a scene of "haggling."¹⁷

¹⁵ English translation from Gerard de Lairese is taken from *A Treatise on the Art of Painting*, vol. II, London: Edward Orme, 1817 edition 179. "Doch men dient dit voor afte weeten, waar in een schoon en konstig Stilleven bestaat: want het is niet genoeg, dat danig een Stuk natuurlyk en wel is geschilderd. De verkiezing is noch veel meer; die bekoort en voldoet de zinnen der aanschouwers, en maakt den Meester roemruchtig."

¹⁶ Wayne Franits, *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-century Dutch Art* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1993) 92.

¹⁷ Franits (1993) 92.

Adriana's fine taste and aesthetic choice are echoed by her costly fur-trimmed jacket, a garment more typically seen in genre paintings of women in domestic interiors. It is used as well to distinguish Adriana not only from the fishwife, but also from other market goers in the middleground, none of whom are dressed with such elegance.¹⁸

The *Portrait of Adriana van Heusden and her Daughter in the New Amsterdam Fish Market* successfully exemplifies the artist's and the sitter/patron's discriminating tastes as creator and collector. The viewer is also involved in acknowledging the skill of the painter and the admirable qualities of the subject. That the painting was highly valued by both Adriana van Heusden and Emanuel de Witte is clear from documents that record extended legal battles involving the painting. In 1663 the artist left the household of Adriana van Heusden and her husband Joris de Wijs, extricating himself from their longstanding agreement that de Witte would receive room and board as well as 800 guilders a year in return for all the pictures he painted while in the couple's residence. On de Witte's departure, he took four paintings with him, including the genre-portrait of Adriana van Heusden.¹⁹ Of the three other works, two were unfinished—a winter scene, and a church interior. The third painting was another fish market scene.²⁰

What value might a portrait of another person have had for the artist who painted it? We know that the picture was significant to Adriana, due to the extraordinary lengths to which she went in order to retrieve it. In 1669, Adriana, widowed and now married to her second husband, Johannes van Heden, initiated legal action through her new spouse to recover the four paintings from de Witte. The published legal brief cites the original agreement with her first husband and claims the four works as her property. Since a woman could inherit a husband's property upon his death, the portrait would then become hers through hereditary inheritance laws, and would be her rightful possession.²¹ As part of the court proceedings, testimony was issued by two witnesses who had seen the four paintings in Adriana's home, including the portrait. They were able to identify the genre-portrait to prove her claim of ownership. They described the picture as "a little painted

piece...depicting the new Fishmarket, at the Haarlem lock, there also under another stand [fishseller's stall] [is] the portrait likeness of Adriana van Heusden."²² None of the other pictures taken by de Witte is described with such detail in the documents, nor were they the sole focus of a number of the legal proceedings, as was the genre-portrait.

The lengths to which de Witte went to avoid relinquishing the genre-portrait are equally as impressive. De Witte kept the genre-portrait in his possession for four years until he was forced to part with it in order to ameliorate a large debt to a colleague, Johannes Collaert, in 1667.²³ In 1669, de Witte was given a court order to return the four pictures to Adriana's second husband or reimburse the plaintiffs for the sum of 450 guilders, a large amount of money for four paintings. De Witte did not obey the order since the genre-portrait was no longer in his possession. In 1670, the genre-portrait's new owner, Johannes Collaert, put Adriana's genre-portrait up for sale at the *Heerenlogement* in Amsterdam. Johannes van Heden, who had claimed ownership of the painting on behalf of his wife Adriana, successfully enacted a second legal procedure to stop the sale.²⁴ In 1671, de Witte finally agreed to return the pictures or remunerate Adriana van Heusden. A few months later, de Witte stated that before returning the pictures, he would complete the two unfinished ones, change another at Adriana's request and would restore the genre-portrait of Adriana that ostensibly had incurred some minor damage.²⁵ On the pretense of cleaning the genre-portrait, de Witte and Collaert removed the work from its frame but then replaced it with a copy. The copy was returned to the *Heerenlogement*, where the original had been placed for sale.

The *Portrait of Adriana van Heusden and Her Daughter at the New Amsterdam Fishmarket* had value enough for the artist and later owner Johannes Collaert to have been copied not once, but twice. Johannes Collaert of Amsterdam was known to have possessed two contemporary copies in 1671.²⁶ The original portrait was still in the possession of Collaert during late 1671.²⁷ A deposition of these events given by de Witte suggests that Adriana likely obtained her picture eventually, though no records can confirm this. One of the seven-

¹⁸ Female market shoppers in Gabriel Metsu's *Vegetable Market in Amsterdam*, 1661-62 (Paris, Louvre) and *Bird Seller*, 1662 (Dresden, Gemäldegalerie), both wear colorful jackets of the same type in public. I would assume that because images of mistress and maid in the market place are a common type, the jacket may have been used in a public setting in this sense to distinguish the station between the two women.

¹⁹ Neil Maclaren and Christopher Brown, *The Dutch School: 1600-1900* (London: National Gallery Publications, Ltd., 1991) 489.

²⁰ Abraham Bredius, *Künstler-Inventare V* (Den Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1915-22) 1841, 1837-39.

²¹ Peter Sutton, *Masters of Seventeenth-century Dutch Genre Painting* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1984) xxvi.

²² In 1670, the portrait was identified in an affidavit by artists Pieter de Hooch and Hieronymus Pickaart. They claimed to have seen the painting in the de Wijs home sometime between 1661-63, while de Witte lived there. The

picture is described as "een stukje schilderij...uytbeeldende de nieuwe Vismarkt, aan harlemmer Sluys, daar in ook onder andere stondt het portret ofte countrefejtsel van Adriana van Heusden." See MacLaren 458. Author's translation. After leaving the de Wijs-Heusdens, de Witte was recorded as staying with Laurens Mauritz. Doucy, where the picture was again seen between 1664-65. A. Bredius, *Oud Holland*, v.7, 1889 (Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1976) 166. Also cited in Maclaren and Brown 491.

²³ To this, Pieter de Hooch testified that the son of Laurens Mauritz. Doucy, whom de Witte was living with at the time, sold the painting in 1667 to Johannes Collaert, an artist, in return for the settlement of de Witte's debts with Doucy's father. Maclaren and Brown 489.

²⁴ *Oud Holland* 166; *Künstler-Inventare V*, 1840.

²⁵ *Künstler-Inventare V*, 1844.

²⁶ Maclaren and Brown 489-490.

teenth-century copies is known today, in a private collection.²⁸ The location of the second copy is now unknown.

Evident from the fact that it attracted the interest of a number of buyers between 1667 and 1670 and was copied at least twice, why would the *Portrait of Adriana van Heusden and her Daughter at the New Amsterdam Fishmarket* have apparent value for so many people besides the artist and sitter? While it was standard practice for Dutch families to have portraits of heads of state, or other nationally important figures in their homes, or for elite art lovers to have self-portraits of famous artists, such as Rembrandt, in their collections, a

burgher housewife would hardly seem to have had that same appeal.²⁹ It may have been the innovative and unusual genre-portrait aspect of the work conflating the portrait of Adriana with a lively market scene that made it desirable to a wider audience. The work may also have been appreciated for the fine quality of painting and the versatility of the artist, allowing the patron and the viewer to participate in the act of *verkiezing*, or aesthetic discrimination, along with Adriana.

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²⁷ Maclaren 459.

²⁸ Manke misidentified the later copy as the original, now in the National Gallery, London, painted between 1661-63. Manke, cat. no. 222.

²⁹ Ernst van de Wetering, "The Multiple Functions of Rembrandt's Self-Portraits," *Rembrandt by Himself* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1999) 23-25.



Figure 1. Emanuel de Witte, *Portrait of Adriana van Heusden and her Daughter at the New Amsterdam Fishmarket*, 1661-63. © The National Gallery of London.



Figure 2. Jacob Gerritsz Cuyp, *Fish Seller*, 1627. Dordrechts Museum, Dordrecht.



Figure 3. Adriaen van Utrecht, *The Fishmarket*, Rubenshuis, Antwerpen © Collectiebeleid.



Figure 4. H. Coveyn. *Woman Inspecting Fish*. Present whereabouts unknown.