

PAN

AMSTERDAM

LAWRENCE STEIGRAD FINE ARTS



The Sculptor Artus Quellinus I in his Studio

signed and dated R. Craeyvanger 1869 in the lower right
oil on panel
17 ¾ x 25 ¼ inches (45.08 x 64.14 cm.)

In this highly imaginative depiction Reinier Craeyvanger transports the viewer into the well-appointed Amsterdam studio of the sculptor Artus Quellinus I in the act of presenting a commissioned portrait bust. Judging by the expression of the sitter and his family ranging from dislike to disappointment, things are about to go seriously awry. Quellinus puts on a brave face, while the assistant surreptitiously watching from a side door is highly amused.

After the Belgium succession in 1830 there was an assertive movement in The Netherlands to revive interest in the country's seventeenth century art in the hope of fostering a national identity. Painters chose to portray historical scenes from the period now labeled the "Golden Age", a notable example being Hendrick Jacobus Scholten's *The Princess of Orange Visiting the Workshop of Bartholomeus van der Helst* now in the Rijksmuseum (circa 1860, oil on panel, 46 x 59 cm., inv. No. SK-A-4701).[1] But whereas Scholten's retelling of the event is straightforward, Craeyvanger by injecting humor into the situation makes it much more accessible to contemporary viewers.

Quellinus (1609 – 1668) is at once recognizable as Craeyvanger replicated the portrait engraved by Richardus Collin in 1662 after the painting by his brother Erasmus Quellinus II published in Cornelis de Bie's Golden Cabinet. His career began under the instruction of his father Erasmus Quellinus I in Antwerp, and then went to Italy. He returned to Antwerp by 1640 – 1641 and became a master in the Guild of Saint Luke. By 1650 his fame had grown to such an extent that the Amsterdam ministry invited him to undertake the immense project of overseeing the sculptural decoration for the new town hall. For the next fourteen years he lived in Amsterdam where he “exerted enormous influence. Particularly in the Northern Netherlands it is difficult to overestimate the effect of this. It can be claimed that his work on [the] Amsterdam Town Hall lay at the foundation of the whole future evolution of Dutch sculpture”.

[2] Unsurprisingly during his sojourn in Amsterdam, Quellinus received many commissions of which the most important were portrait busts of Amsterdam's burgomasters. “He developed an entirely new sort of figure for this, that can best be described as the ‘bourgeois ruler's portrait’. By applying the latest Italian ideas about the sculpted bust – a preeminently royal genre – to commoners, Quellinus made an original, typically Netherlandish contribution to European Baroque portraiture”. [3] It is just such a portrait bust that Craeyvanger's panel displays with a grisaille painting of the Town Hall hanging directly behind the sculptor.

Within the city of Amsterdam and its jurisdiction slavery was banned, but due to transatlantic trade a black community in the 1630s formed around what is today Jodenbreestraat in Amsterdam, an area where many painters lived including Rembrandt. Living in such close proximity prompted artists to include black figures in their work, [4] to the point that “almost all the major history painters, from Abraham Bloemaert to Jan Steen and Gerard de Lairesse, as well as the minor masters who followed in their footsteps, included black people in their paintings. ... black secondary figures became almost the norm.” Their dress in these works tended towards the exotic. [5] For most of the nineteenth century Dutch artists paid little attention to black people instead painting landscapes or “heroic scenes from the country's past” from which they were excluded. [6] Craeyvanger endeavoring to paint an authentic recreation of the work of a seventeenth century artist followed the example set by his predecessors.

Craeyvanger was extremely popular during his lifetime. He began his studies with his brother Gijsbertus, followed by the Amsterdam Academy with Jan Willem Pieneman. He worked in Utrecht, The Hague and Amsterdam. In 1839 he became a member of the *Arti et Amicitiae*. In Amsterdam he at times collaborated with Alexander Oltmans. He became a lecturer at the Amsterdam Academy and served as chairman of *Arti et Amicitiae* for five years. He was also a founding member of *Pulchri Studio*, initially responsible along with Herb van Hove for the drawing evenings. Further he was a member of The Hague Etching Club. He was the teacher of Coenraed Willem Koch and Joannes van Liefland.

[7]

Craeyvanger worked in oils, watercolor, and sepia as well as executed etchings and lithographs. His subjects started with landscapes and cityscapes but branched out to include portraits, church interiors, genre and historical scenes. He further made copies after the old masters such as Jan Steen, Gerard Dou and Frans van Mieris among others. He was an excellent singer and violinist. [8]

Works by Craeyvanger formed part of the permanent collections of museums in Amsterdam; Haarlem; The Hague; Harrogate, United Kingdom; London; Rotterdam; and Utrecht. An 1849 portrait of Craeyvanger done in an etching by Jan Weissenbruch is now in the Rijksmuseum (inventory no. RP-P-OB-61.195).

[1] Jenny Reynaerts, *Mirror of Reality, 19th – Century Painting in the Netherlands*, Rijksmuseum, 2019, pp. 152, 156, 160.

[2] Hans Vlieghe, *Flemish Art and Architecture 1585 – 1700*, Yale University Press, Cambridge, 1998, pp. 243, 246.

[3] Frits Scholten, *Artus Quellinus, sculptor of Amsterdam*, Rijksmuseum, Nieuw Amsterdam, 2010, p. 49.

[4] Elmer Kolfin, “Black in the art of Rembrandt's Time”, pp. 21-22, 26, 145, and Mank Ponte “Black in Amsterdam About 1650” in *Black in Rembrandt's Time*, The Rembrandt House Museum, WBooks, Zwolle, 2020.

[5] Elmer Kolfin, *op.cit.*, p. 26.

[6] Esther Schreuder, “Black is Beautiful, black is hot the attraction of black culture” in *Black is Beautiful: Rubens to Dumas*, Waanders, Zwolle, 2008, p. 11.

[7] Biographical information taken from Willem Steenhoff, “Reinier Craeyvanger” in Thieme Becker, *Allgemeines Lexicon der Bilden Künstler*, volume VIII, Veb E.A. Seemann Verlag, Leipzig, 1913, p. 46; Pieter A. Scheen “Reinier Craeyvanger” in *Lexicon Nederlandse Beeldende Kunstenaars 1750 – 1880*, Uitgeverij Pieter A. Scheen, BV, s'-

Gravenhage, 1981, p. 102; John Sillevs, "The Heyday of the Hague School", p. 78 and Ronald de Llew, "The Avant - Gardé", p. 113, fn. 15 in The Hague School, Dutch Masters of the 19th Century, Haags Gemeentemuseum, 1983; and "Reinier Craeyvanger" on rkd.nl (RKD Explore) website.

[8] Pieter A. Scheen, op.cit., p. 102; and "Reinier Craeyvanger" on rkd.nl op.cit.