

JEAN GOSSART
*A YOUNG
PRINCESS
(DOROTHEA OF
DENMARK?)*

LORNE
CAMPBELL

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INSCRIPTIONS, PROVENANCE, EXHIBITIONS AND VERSION

Jan Gossaert (Jean Gossart)

NG2211

A Young Princess (Dorothea of Denmark?)

Oil on oak panel, 38.2 x 29.1 cm

Inscriptions

On the jewel pinned to her breast are the letters: .../IHESVS/M(ARIA?)...
N.E..../...

On the armillary sphere are the letters:

•I•I•A•A•N•N•R•R•R•P•E•E•E•S•S•S•(H?)•G•T•Y. This may be an anagram of the artist's name IENNI[N] G[O]SSART PAI[NT]RE:¹ the letters R E S (H?) Y remain to be explained.

Provenance

On the reverse are inscriptions in French written in an eighteenth – or early nineteenth – century hand: the portrait was evidently in France in about 1800.² It was possibly in the collection of Major General Sir Burges Camac, who joined the army in 1800 and died in 1845.³ He seems to have been an enthusiastic collector of pictures and sold at Christie's in London on 23 June 1838, lot 80, 'J. de Maubeuge, Portrait of a Princess of Burgundy in a rich dress'. It was sold for £20

¹ On 12 September 1532, Gossart signed a quittance 'Jennin Gossart painter': see Steppe 1965¹ p. 36 and the facsimile on the back cover of the Rotterdam-Bruges exh. cat.

² For the inscriptions, see Technical notes. Since Francis I is described simply as 'françois premier', it seems likely that the writer was a Frenchman rather than a Netherlander.

³ *Army Lists* 1845, p. 27 (116); 1846, p. 551; will dated 2 November 1844 proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on 4 December 1845: NA, PROB 11/2027.

9s. 6d. to John Rushout (1770–1859), 2nd Baron Northwick.⁴ At the Northwick sale, by Phillips at Thirlestaine House, Cheltenham, lot 1456 on 18 August 1859, ‘HOLBEIN (SCHOOL) Portrait of a Lady’, was sold to Sir Edmund Anthony Harley Lechmere (1826–1894), Bart, who certainly owned NG2211 in 1882.⁵ He lived at The Rhyd in Worcestershire. The portrait was among pictures sold by his son Sir Edmund Arthur Lechmere (1865–1937), Bart, at Christie's on 27 April 1901 (75), when it was bought by Pottier. It passed to the Belgian critic Léon Gauchez (1825–1907), who used the pseudonym Paul Leroi and lived in Paris.⁶ After his death, his collection was sold at the Hôtel Drouot on 16 December 1907; NG2211 was lot 29 and was bought by Agnew. It was purchased in 1908, from Agnew's, at cost price, out of the Clarke Fund.

Exhibitions

Worcester 1882 (Old Masters 87); Bruges 1907 (68); Rotterdam-Bruges 1965 (19); NG 1975 (17); London V&A 1980 (P2); NG 2008–9 (29); New York 2010–11 (57); NG 2011 (57).

Version

A simplified copy of the head and shoulders was in 1994 with Borgia Interiors. It is painted on an oak panel; measuring 25.4 x 20.8 cm, it would seem to be rather badly damaged and is of uncertain date.⁷

⁴ Information kindly sent by Lynda McLeod, Christie's Archives, email of 6 October 2009.

⁵ He lent it to the Worcestershire Exhibition in that year. For the Lechmere family, see Shirley 1883.

⁶ Laclotte et al. 1989, p. 256; Ingrid Goddeen, ‘De Belgische kunst-handelaar Léon Gauchez (1825–1907), een tijdgenoot van Siegfried Bing’, *Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Bulletin*, 1/2010, pp. 212–29.

⁷ Photograph at the NG.

TECHNICAL NOTES

The portrait must have been cleaned several times before coming to the National Gallery and at least one of those early cleanings was rather drastic. It was cleaned at the Gallery in 2009–10, when disfiguring retouchings were removed. Though there is only one significant loss, of paint and ground, from the fingers of the child's left hand, there is abrasion in the green glazes in the background, the darker areas of the hair, parts of her garments and the armillary sphere, including the inscription. The blue parts of her sleeves and her snood should be purple: the red lake component has faded. The original colour can still be seen at the lower edge, where it has been protected by frames.

The panel is one board of oak, vertical in grain and radially cut. There is a very slight convex twisted warp. Dendrochronological investigation has established that the wood is Baltic oak and that the 147 growth rings were formed between 1357 and 1503.⁸ The panel is about 9 mm thick in the centre but the back is steeply chamfered on all four sides to a thickness of 2 mm at the edges (measured in the middle of the lower edge). An old split towards the centre of the lower edge has been repaired. On the reverse are inscriptions written in ink: along the top edge: 'Leonard De Vins[y?]...'; and, sideways up the right edge: 'peint par Leonard De Vinsy premier/peintre De francois premier'. Beneath the first inscription is another, almost totally effaced and completely illegible. The number 271 is written in black ink across the middle; at the top are the remains of a stencil, 4 N(?) D. Also on the reverse, on paper labels, are the numbers 82(4?)0 and 242, and several round objects, apparently paper seals, some partially removed, others bearing traces of embossed designs.

The ground is chalk, probably bound in animal glue, and is covered with a lead-white priming. Both ground and paint continue to the edges of the support: the portrait may originally have had unpainted edges which have been trimmed away but the steep chamfers at the back suggest that it was painted out of its frame. A vertical disturbance of the paint near the left edge seems to indicate that when

⁸ Report by Peter Klein dated 11 August 1997 in the NG dossier.

the paint of the child's right sleeve was still soft the panel was fitted into a frame that was subsequently removed.

Some of the lines of the fictive frame are incised. Extensive freehand underdrawing is visible in places where the paint, over time, has become more transparent. The underdrawing is more completely visible when infrared imaging techniques are used. The underdrawing has been applied over the priming; the lines appear rather broken in reflectograms but they are probably in a liquid material. Very little drawing can be seen in the face, apart from the positions of the eyes and the outline of the profile, which was moved slightly during painting. The hands and clothing are much more extensively and freely drawn, with hatching, often rather scribbled, to indicate areas of shadow. There are minor changes in both hands: the middle finger of the left hand is drawn straighter and the ring finger of the same hand is shorter in the drawing. The drawing in the sleeves indicates folds and shadows, not always followed in the final painting. Here Gossaert appears to concentrate on the structure of the clothes rather than on the decorative patterns and jewels, which do not seem to be underdrawn. The armillary sphere may be roughly outlined over indications for shadows in the dress but it is painted without a reserve on top of the dress. There are changes, difficult to interpret, in the snood, where some of the pearls are painted on top of the glaze on the background.

The blue parts of the sleeve are painted with mixtures of azurite and red lake and were originally purple. The red bodice has a dark orange-red underpaint containing mixtures of red lake, red earth, black and white, covered with a faded, red lake glaze. The sleeves are modelled with various mixtures of white, black and orange-red earth.⁹ The medium was analysed in one sample, from translucent red lake-containing paint on the red bodice, and was found to be linseed oil; it had not been heat-bodied. Some resin, probably pine-resin, was detected as an addition to the oil.¹⁰

⁹ Report by M. Spring dated July 1994 in NG Scientific Department file.

¹⁰ Report by R. White and J. Pile, NG Scientific Department file, dated 9 January 1995. Analysis was carried out by GC-MS and FTIR microscopy.

When the green background is examined under a stereomicroscope, there appear to be darker green parallel lines on top of a lighter green underpaint. If this is examined more closely, a strong texture becomes evident at the surface of the underpaint. It was perhaps made by a tool such as a stiff (hog-hair?) brush used to even-out the paint. Where the thin verdigris glaze is rather worn, it remains only in the depressions and creates the effect now seen on the painting. In certain areas, for example the catchlights of the sitter's left eye, the paint has been dragged and feathered. The last restorer had to take 'great care ... to imitate the thinness of the original technique, with its slight softening of detail typical of Gossaert's late works. This was especially important when retouching the abraded pearl brooches since, under magnification, it can be seen that the painter sometimes blotted his paint to soften the edges'.¹¹

DESCRIPTION

The bright green background is framed in a brownish, possibly wooden, moulding. The child's hair is highlighted in dull orange-yellow. The irises of her eyes appear to be grey with blue arcs next to the pupils. The semi-transparent coif beneath her hood is patterned in yellow, representing embroidery with gold threads. The hood itself, thickly sewn with pearls, is tied under her chin; the pattern on the snood is similar, but not identical, to the pattern on her sleeves. Her shirt is edged with a looped rope of gold thread. Around her neckline are large pearls sewn onto pieces of fabric ornamented with gold threads. There is a blue stripe between the ornamented fabric and the red bodice. The bodice has become slightly less intense in colour because of the fading of the red lake; it was probably intended to be a richly-coloured red velvet. The sleeves, sewn with single pearls and pearls grouped in eights, are decorated with patterns of interlocking purple (now blue) bands of appliqué sewn with ropes of gold thread. At the wrists, pearls are sewn to the purple bands and strung in three ropes above

¹¹ Report of 9 June 2010 by Jill Dunkerton in the Conservation dossier.

the cuffs, themselves decorated with frills edged with ropes of gold thread. The belt incorporates yet more large pearls. The central jewel in her golden necklace is a point-cut diamond, surrounded by red stones and large pearls. The gold chain is twisted around a golden pin from which hangs a pendant in a golden setting. Around its edges are inscriptions referring to Christ, and possibly also to the Virgin; the seven stones, three triangular, one rectangular and three squarish, are all diamonds. An enormous pearl hangs down from the pendant.

In her left hand the child holds, upside down, a small armillary sphere, made of brass or possibly gilded. The Latin *armilla* means bracelet; the hoops of the skeleton sphere show the motions of the heavenly bodies. The broad diagonal band of the ecliptic would normally have run on the other diagonal and would have been decorated with the signs of the Zodiac and the names of the months. Here it is instead marked with letters which form an anagram of the artist's name. The vertical rod is the celestial axis, the small globe at its centre is the earth, and the horizontal rings mark the Arctic and Antarctic circles, the tropics and the equator. The second diagonal hoop is unusual but may be meant for a horizon ring.¹² The child, touching with her right hand the outer ring of the instrument, indicates a point approximately 55° north of the equator.

ATTRIBUTION AND DATE

Attribution

The eighteenth – or early nineteenth-century inscriptions on the reverse show that the portrait was then believed to be by Leonardo. At the 1882 exhibition it was attributed to Gossart and this attribution has been universally accepted.¹³ The style is in keeping with that of signed portraits by Gossart, for example the

¹² Dr Kristen Lippincott, then Head of Navigational Sciences at the National Maritime Museum, gave much invaluable help over the interpretation of the armillary sphere.

¹³ Friedländer, vol. VIII, no. 75; Davies 1968, pp. 62–3.

Benedictine Monk of 1526 (Louvre),¹⁴ and indeed NG2211 would appear itself to be signed, in anagram, on the armillary sphere.

Date

Davies cited Stella Mary Newton's opinion that 'the costume is fairly precisely datable ca. 1522'. She compared NG2211 with portraits of Charlotte(?) of France (Chicago and Minneapolis), attributed to Jean Clouet and probably painted in about 1522, and with Lucas van Leyden's *Donor presented by the Magdalen* (Munich), dated 1522.¹⁵ There are, however, other resemblances, perhaps more significant, between NG2211 and portraits of Eleonora of Austria, drawn and painted in France in about 1530,¹⁶ or portraits of Mencía de Mendoza, Countess of Nassau, painted in the Low Countries in or shortly after 1530.¹⁷ In those portraits, as in NG2211, the sleeves are no longer of the same fabric as the rest of the dress and they are no longer wide and turned back to reveal large areas of lining as was the fashion in 1522. Eleonora and Mencía wear sleeves constructed from wide bands of rich material held together with jewelled clasps and their shirts are pulled through the gaps, which function much like slashings. In NG2211 the child's sleeves are less complex in structure, since the bands are sewn onto the sleeves. The appliqué work may have made it possible for the child to follow fashion without having to cope with the open bands. The neckline of her bodice, curving upwards like Eleonora's, is very different from the lower, squarer necklines of the early and mid-1520s. Her necklace lies across her shoulders in the same position as Eleonora's and the looping of the chain into a heart shape seems to reflect a fashion of c.1530.¹⁸ In composition and style, NG2211

¹⁴ Friedländer, vol. VIII, no. 72.

¹⁵ Davies 1968, p. 63, note 2; Mrs Newton's notes on the picture are in the NG dossier. For the Chicago and Minneapolis portraits of Charlotte of France (1516–24), see Mellen 1971, plates 61–2; for the Lucas van Leyden, see Friedländer, vol. X, no. 114.

¹⁶ For Jean Clouet's drawing of Eleonora (Chantilly), see Mellen 1971, plate 65; for paintings by and after Joos van Cleve, see Friedländer, vol. IX, no. 108; Campbell 1985, pp. 24–6.

¹⁷ For the portraits of Mencía, see Friedländer, vol. IX, no. 109; Ainsworth in Ainsworth et al 2010, pp. 296–8.

¹⁸ Compare the drawing of Eleonora of Austria cited in note 16 above; or the versions of Joos van Cleve's portrait of Eleonora, Friedländer, vol. IX, nos 108 c, f-h.

resembles Gossart's paintings from the period 1526–32;¹⁹ it may therefore be dated around 1530–2.

THE IDENTITY OF THE SITTER

The picture was exhibited in 1882 and 1907 as a portrait of 'Jacqueline de Bourgogne'. In 1908 Hulin proposed that Jacqueline was Jacoba (Jacqueline), daughter of Adolf of Burgundy, Lord of Veere.²⁰ This identification was tentatively accepted by Davies but rejected by Smith.²¹ Sterk identified the sitter as Isabella of Portugal, the future wife of the Emperor Charles V.²²

The old identification of the sitter as Jacqueline de Bourgogne may reflect a tradition established when the picture was still in France. If that is the case it may carry no more authority than the old attribution to Leonardo and may even be a confused reference to Jacqueline of Bavaria (1401–1436), Countess of Hainault and Holland. On the other hand Adolf of Burgundy was a patron of Gossart²³ and did indeed have a daughter named Jacoba. Born on 3 November 1523, she married as her first husband in December 1541 Jan of Flanders, son of the Lord of Praet, near Bruges; he died in 1545 and she married as her second husband in 1549 Jan, Lord of Kruiningen, Burgrave of Zeeland. She died in 1556.²⁴ No portrait of her has been discovered. She was eight when Gossart died, probably too young to be the sitter here; and, though her father was a rich and powerful nobleman, it seems unlikely that his daughter would ever have dressed as magnificently as the girl with the armillary sphere.²⁵

¹⁹ Compare his *Children of Christian II of Denmark* (Royal Collection) of c.1526 or his portrait of Anna of Bergen (Williamstown) of about the same date: Friedländer, vol. VIII, nos 79, 76; Ainsworth et al. 2010, pp. 272–3, 274–5.

²⁰ H[ulin] de Loo 1908, pp. 100–5.

²¹ Davies 1968, p. 62; Smith 1985, p. 64.

²² Sterk 1980, pp. 279–81.

²³ Van Mander, fol. 225v.

²⁴ Ermerins 1786, p. 44; Vegiano 1865, vol. I, p. 278.

²⁵ Compare the copy after a lost portrait of her elder sister Anna in the 'Recueil d'Arras' (Bibliothèque municipale, Arras, MS 266, fol. 163; Châtelet and Paviot 2007, pp. 260, 269); or Gossart's portrait of their

The magnificence of her dress would be more in keeping with Sterk's theory that she is Isabella of Portugal (1503–1539), who married Charles V in 1526. He argued that the armillary sphere was used as an emblem by her father Emanuel, King of Portugal (died 1521); and that she looks like later portraits of Isabella. The armillary sphere is frequently found in association with King Emanuel's coat of arms in manuscripts produced for him.²⁶ It was used as an emblem by other members of the Portuguese royal family, as well as by unrelated persons in different countries.²⁷ There is no reason to believe that Isabella would have been painted holding her family emblem upside down. The portrait was executed in about 1530, when Isabella was 27 – very much older than the sitter here. Isabella never left the Iberian peninsula and there is no evidence that Gossart ever painted her portrait. If he did, he would have had to base his work on a likeness by another artist. The sitter's clothes and jewellery are not in the Portuguese style. Though there is some resemblance between her and Isabella, the identification as Isabella may be dismissed.

The child represented, who seems to be about nine or 10 years old, must be of the highest rank. Her clothes, sewn with hundreds of pearls, are very much more splendid than those of the princesses of France drawn or painted by Jean Clouet in the 1520s;²⁸ but Eleonora of Austria, Queen of France, is attired with comparable magnificence in portraits of around 1530.²⁹ The only young girls who, in the Low Countries in about 1530, might have appeared so richly dressed were the daughters of King Christian of Denmark, Dorothea and Christina. They resided at the courts of Margaret of Austria and Mary of Hungary; both Margaret

mother Anna of Bergen (see note 19 above).

²⁶ See the various volumes of the 'Leitura Nova' (Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon) discussed in the exh. cat. Antwerp 1991, pp. 218, 222–4.

²⁷ For example John III of Portugal (later volumes of the 'Leitura Nova' cited above, see the exh. cat. Brussels 1991, pp. 176, 180); his sister Beatrice of Portugal, Duchess of Savoy (see the medal of 1554 reproduced in the exh. cat. Lisbon 1983, p. 84); Elizabeth I of England (Strong 1987, pp. 138–40). Compare also the portrait of Giovanni Borgherini and his tutor, from the circle of Giorgione (Washington: Shapley 1979, pp. 217–18) or the portrait of an astronomer attributed to Cariani at Berlin.

²⁸ Mellen 1971, plates 39, 60–2.

²⁹ See note 16 above.

and Charles V gave them enormous quantities of jewellery including huge numbers of pearls.³⁰

Gossart painted the two sisters with their brother in a triple portrait (Royal Collection) which was probably executed shortly after their mother's death in January 1526.³¹ The child on the left in this portrait is Dorothea, who, born on 10 November 1520, would then have been five. With her high forehead, widely spaced greenish-grey eyes, irregularly shaped eyebrows, bowed upper lip, wide lower lip, slightly receding cleft chin and frizzy golden hair, she bears a marked resemblance to the sitter in NG2211, who may well be the same child, five years older. There is also general agreement between the features of the child in NG2211 and those in later likenesses of Dorothea, for example portraits painted in Germany in about 1536 and 1545³² or an even later portrait, from the time of her widowhood (1566–80), in the Ambras series of miniature portraits.³³

The child in NG2211 points purposefully at her armillary sphere. The sphere itself, unusually small, is peculiar in its construction, which might suggest that the artist did not have a real armillary sphere in front of him but had to work from a print. Gossart's daughter, however, married between 1525 and 1532 the painter Hendrik van der Heyden, whose uncle Gaspar van der Heyden (c.1495 – before 1561) was a goldsmith, and from 1527 to 1529 was involved in the manufacture of globes and worked with the geographers Gemma Frisius and Gerard Mercator.³⁴ It is unlikely that Gossart did not know what armillary spheres looked like or how they were used. If the painted sphere is strangely constructed, then Gossart has made it so deliberately – perhaps to accommodate his anagram, perhaps also to allow the child to make a specific gesture. She may be treating it as an expensive toy, she is after all holding it upside down, but it is conceivable that the sphere and her gesture can be interpreted in political terms.

³⁰ See, for example, Finot 1885, pp. 4, 32, 39.

³¹ Friedländer, vol. VIII, no. 79; Campbell 1985, pp. 53–6.

³² Both in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich: Flamand Christiensen 1937, pp. 133, 137. Compare Heinz 1975, p. 239 fig. 316.

³³ Reproduced by Heinz 1975, p. 238 fig. 313.

³⁴ M. Smeyers 1968, p. 79.

Neither Dorothea nor her father Christian II of Denmark are known to have used the armillary sphere as an emblem but the child depicted here is indicating on the outer ring of her sphere a point approximately 55° north of the equator. The latitude of Copenhagen is 56° north; the child may be directing our attention to her father's lost kingdoms; the sphere, and the world, may be upside down because of the political disturbances which drove him and his family out of Scandinavia. Such points could have been made more obviously if Gossart had included a terrestrial globe rather than an armillary sphere, but that might have disturbed the balance of his composition and it may not have been his intention to make points too obviously.

A portrait of Dorothea attributed to Gossart was mentioned in 1685 in the inventory of the castle of Heidelberg, where it hung next to a picture of her husband, the Elector Palatine, also attributed to Gossart:

Frederick II, Elector, Palatine, with on one side the arms of the Palatinate with the Golden Fleece; painted on panel by Johann Malbodius or Jean de Moabeuse.

The wife of the same Frederick II by the same painter.³⁵

As Gossart died in 1532 and as Dorothea did not marry until 1535, these portraits must have been painted before their marriage and did not necessarily form a pair. Frederick (1482–1556) was made a Knight of the Golden Fleece in 1516. Heidelberg was sacked by the French in 1689. The portrait of Dorothea might have been taken to France; the inscriptions on the reverse of NG2211 show that it was in France in about 1800.

In the early 1530s, portraits of Dorothea were much in demand as negotiations for her marriage proceeded. In 1532 the Countess of Nassau paid van Orley for

³⁵ 'Fridericus 2^{us} Elector Palat: auf der einen Seiten das ChurPfaltz. Wapen mit dem Güldenem vellus auf Holz gemahlt, von Johann Malbodius oder Jean de Moabeuse.

Ejusdem Friderici IIⁱ Gemahlin von selbigem Mahler' (Flamand Christiensen 1937, p. 135).

two portraits of the princesses of Denmark, apparently not done from life but copied from other likenesses;³⁶ and in the same year ‘a painter living in Brussels’ was paid for portraits of both sisters which were given to ambassadors from Scotland.³⁷ Conceivably these two portraits of Dorothea were copies of Gossart’s painting. Dorothea was then 11 and was not quite 12 when Gossart died.

Dorothea of Denmark, born in November 1520, was the elder daughter of Christian II and Isabella of Austria and the sister of Christina, Duchess of Milan and Lorraine, whose portrait by Holbein is in the National Gallery (NG2475). Brought to the Low Countries in 1523 when her father was deposed, Dorothea was educated at the courts of Margaret of Austria and Mary of Hungary. She married in 1535 the Count Palatine Frederick II, who succeeded as Elector Palatine in 1544 and died in 1556. She died, childless, in 1580.³⁸

Although Gossart's portrait has lost some of its opulence of colour, it remains a most arresting image, full of contrived contradictions. The painted frame appears to be in the same plane as the real frame but is overlapped by the child, who is projected towards the spectator, in front of the frame. Very richly dressed, she seems to be playing with an armillary sphere, yet it is not an ordinary armillary sphere and she may know exactly what it is. She may be using it to make a political point. If she is indeed Dorothea of Denmark, the portrait may have been commissioned by Margaret of Austria or another of the Habsburgs, for whom Gossart often worked. It was conceivably the portrait by Gossart which Dorothea took with her to the Palatinate and which was at Heidelberg in 1685.

³⁶ Steppe 1969, pp. 480–1.

³⁷ Finot 1885, p. 31; Campbell 1985, p. xxxii.

³⁸ Cartwright 1913, *passim*; Hasenclever 1930–1.