

JEAN GOSSART
*A MAN HOLDING
A GLOVE*

LORNE
CAMPBELL

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PROVENANCE AND EXHIBITIONS

Jan Gossaert (Jean Gossart)

NG946

A Man holding a Glove

Oil on oak panel, 25.0 x 17.4 cm, painted surface 24.3 x 16.8 cm

Provenance

The portrait was in the collection of Charles I, King of Great Britain, whose CR brand is on the reverse. It can be identified in van der Doort's catalogue of the king's pictures as a 'Mantua piece' which hung in the Cabinet Room off the Privy Gallery in the Palace of Whitehall.¹ It was therefore purchased by Charles I from Mantua and must have belonged to Vincenzo II Gonzaga (1594–1627), Duke of Mantua; but it has not been identified in the 1627 inventory of his collection.² It was presumably sold from the Royal Collection during the Commonwealth but it was recovered for Charles II and placed in the King's Closet at Whitehall, which was apparently arranged to imitate Charles I's Cabinet Room.³ It remained at Whitehall in the reign of James II⁴ but appears to have been moved to Kensington Palace by William III and in 1697 and 1700 to have been hanging on the staircase there.⁵ It was certainly among the pictures removed by William III

1. 'A mantua peece. Item the Picture of an indifferent auncient Gentleman in a blac Capp standing at the right side of his head - in a grey Coney skin coullor'd furr'd gowne, and in his left hand a paire of gloves and wth his right hand - upon a Table being redd, in a wooden frame painted upon the right lighte.' The measurements are given as 10 ½ x 8 in., 26.7 x 20.3 cm. See Millar 1958–60, p. 90 (73). 'Painted upon the right lighte' means that the light falls from the spectator's left (*ibid.*, p. xix). For the Cabinet Room, see Millar 1977, p. 47.

2. For the purchase of the Mantua pictures, see *ibid.*, pp. 40–2; the 1627 inventory is printed in Luzzio 1913.

3. Inventory of Charles II's pictures at Whitehall and Hampton Court, MS of c.1666–7 in the office of the Surveyor of The Queen's Pictures, Whitehall No. 346: 'An olde man in a black cap & a furr'd gowne holding his gloves in his lefte hand', measurements given as 9 x 7 in., 22.9 x 17.8 cm. For the King's Closet, see Millar 1977, pp. 67–9.

4. BL, MS Harl. 1890, fol. 61v (510): 'Holben. A mans head in a black Cap Gloves in his hand'; *A Catalogue of the Pictures, &c., Belonging to King James the Second*, London 1758, No. 680.

5. BL, MS Harl. 7025, A List of his Majestie's Pictures as they are placed in Kensington House, 1697, fol. 193

(died 1702) to the United Provinces and it was included in a list drawn up by Alexander Stanhope in 1702 of 'pictures which were carried to Holland'.⁶ By 1712 it was in the palace of Het Loo,⁷ near Apeldoorn (west of Deventer and north of Arnhem), where it formed part of the estate of the Stadholder Johan Willem Friso, Prince of Orange (died 1711). In 1712–13 Robert Du Val, curator of the Stadholder's collections, drew up another list of pictures claimed as Crown property by Queen Anne. No. 88 was 'Een dito [sc. Een Pourtrait van Holbein]' (a ditto [Portrait by Holbein]); and 'n88' is written in white in the lower-right corner of NG946 in a characteristic script found on other paintings included in Du Val's list.⁸

It subsequently passed to Johan Willem Friso's son Willem IV (died 1751) and to his son Willem V (deposed 1802, died 1806); and it was still at Het Loo in 1757.⁹ How and when it returned to England are not known but it belonged to William Wells (1760–1847) of Redleaf in Kent (Landseer's friend and patron) and was sold with the rest of his collection at Christie's on 12 May 1848 (40). It was bought by Evans for Scarisbrick: Charles Scarisbrick (1801–1860) of Scarisbrick Hall and Wrightington Hall in Lancashire. His collection was dispersed at Christie's in May 1861. NG946 was sold on 12 May 1861 (456) to the dealer Emery. It was afterwards, probably by 1863, in the collection of Wynn Ellis (1790–1875). On 18 November 1875 he made a will bequeathing his collection to

(30): 'Holben, A Mans head small life'; or (32): 'Holben, A Man at ½ length with two hands'. BL, MS Harl. 5150, List of His Majesties Pictures as they are now Placed in Kensington House, 1700, fol. 10 (29): 'Holben, Mans head Smal Life'; or (30): 'Holben, A Mans head Small Life'; or (31): 'Holben, Man ½ length with 2 hands'.

6. MS at Blenheim (transcript by Oliver Millar in the office of the Surveyor of The Queen's Pictures), No. 23: 'A Small mans Head, with Gloves in his Hand, by Holben'. For a similar list in BL, MS Add. 61359, fols 80–1, and for a French translation sent to The Hague, see Brenninkmeyer-de Rooij et al. 1988, pp. 65–123. Alexander Stanhope (1638–1707) was Queen Anne's envoy to the States General.

7. 1712 valuation of Het Loo (43); 'Een portret van Holben' (Drossaers & Lunsingh Scheurleer 1974–6, vol. I, p. 697; Brenninkmeyer-de Rooij et al. 1988, p. 107); 1713 inventory of Het Loo, 'in 't cabinet van schilderijen': 'Een pourtrait van een persoon hebbende een handschoen in de hand, van Holbein' (Drossaers and Lunsingh Scheurleer 1974–6, vol. I, p. 679 [895]; Brenninkmeyer-de Rooij et al. 1988, p. 107).

8. Brenninkmeyer-de Rooij et al. 1988, pp. 53, 60, 107.

9. 'Het schilderijcabinet ... Een dito [sc. portrait] van Holbein', measurements given as 9 ½ x 6 ½ in., 24.1 x 16.5 cm' (Drossaers and Lunsingh Scheurleer 1974–6, vol. II, p. 645 [118]; Brenninkmeyer-de Rooij et al. 1988, p. 107).

the National Gallery. NG946 was one of two pictures, both described as 'Holbein. Portrait of a Gentleman', which were then in the library of his residence at 30 Cadogan Square;¹⁰ it was among the paintings accepted by the Trustees in 1876.

Exhibitions

Probably London BI 1863 (88);¹¹ NG 1975 (15); Lisbon 1983; New York 2010–11 (60); NG 2011 (60).

TECHNICAL NOTES

Cleaned in 1972, the portrait is in good condition. Drying cracks in many areas (which may indicate that the painter was using black without adequate dryers) have been retouched and there is some repaint in the background, where the overall tone is now too low and where the shadow cast by the sitter is scarcely visible. The red lake has faded in the sleeves and probably also in the tablecloth.

The panel is a single board of oak, vertical in grain and tangentially cut and has suffered some slight woodworm damage. The reverse of the panel has been slightly bevelled at the top and bottom to a thickness of 6 mm (measured at the centre of the lower edge). Dendrochronological investigation has established that the wood is Baltic oak and that the 136 growth rings were formed between 1341 and 1476.¹² On the reverse are the crowned CR brand of Charles I and various chalk marks – only a figure 5 remains legible.¹³ Unpainted wood and *barbes*, where the ground and paint end, survive along all four sides and indicate that the

10. Extracts from the will, codicil and schedule in the NG archive, NG 5/193/1875.

11. As 'Portrait of a Man. Holbein', lent by Wynn Ellis; but he owned another picture (now NG947) which might have been so described.

12. Report by Peter Klein dated 18 January 2006 in the NG dossier.

13. Reproduction of the reverse in Brenninkmeyer-de Rooij et al. 1988, p. 109.

panel originally had an engaged frame that was in place before the ground was applied. The edges of the panel have evidently been trimmed. The ground is chalk, presumably bound in animal glue, and encroaches in places onto the unpainted edges where it has seeped under the original engaged frame. The priming is a thin layer of lead white tinted with a very small amount of lead-tin yellow.¹⁴

Very little that could definitely be called underdrawing was visible in the infrared photograph or by infrared reflectography. The lines for the folds in the pink sleeves, which are in a liquid medium, are the clearest and there may be some drawing for the features of the face. Infrared imaging also revealed changes that were made at the painting stage: in the glove, the finger on our left has been lengthened and the little finger and ring finger of the sitter's left hand have been extended over the fur of his gown. Above his left elbow, the pink of the upper sleeve has been brought across the fur collar.

Two unusual pigments have been identified. Purple fluorite, mixed with lead white and a little red lake, occurs in the pink sleeves.¹⁵ The mineral pigment in the underpaint of the dark green background was found to consist of a green copper sulphate in addition to malachite (copper carbonate).¹⁶ This forms a relatively opaque underlayer in the green background, which is covered by a fairly thin glaze of verdigris partially dissolved in oil.¹⁷ The medium is linseed oil; no resin has been detected as an addition to the oil in any of the translucent green layers of the background, the pink sleeves or the red tablecloth, nor is there any evidence that any of the oil has been heat-bodied.¹⁸ The fur has been worked wet-

14. A few particles of lead-tin yellow were detected in the priming layer using SEM–EDX analysis.

15. The use of fluorite is unusual in early Netherlandish paintings but it has been identified in a few works dating from around the same time as this portrait. See Spring 2000, pp. 21–4.

16. This is reported and discussed, together with other occurrences, in Spring 2000, pp. 21–24. The copper sulphate had a characteristic tabular particle shape visible in cross-sections under the optical microscope. It was identified using SEM–EDX but has not been further analysed to define the exact mineral species. Malachite was identified by FTIR microscopy (report in NG Scientific Department file by J. Pilc, 7 April 1994).

17. Information from Marika Spring; her memorandum of 5 April 2000 in the NG Scientific Department file on this painting.

18. Report in NG Scientific Department file by R. White and J. Pilc dated 14 December 1994. Analysis was

in-wet. The paint of the whites of the eyes has been feathered into the irises. Similarly, the pink paint of the cheek is feathered into the shadow cast by the nose, and the shadow cast by the fur at his collar is feathered into the white shirt, which in turn is feathered into the darker shadow beside it. A *sgraffito* technique seems to have been used to give texture to the tablecloth. Lines from the beard and moustache are painted on top of the background and have beaded.

DESCRIPTION

A shadow behind the sitter's head appears to be cast by him across the background. His hat is dark grey; the brim is turned up and held with laces tipped with yellow metal; the hat is worn over a yellow cap (possibly made from gold threads). Though his hair is black, his beard is brown. His eyes are brown, with yellow rings around the pupils. Over a black doublet he wears a pink gown trimmed and lined with brownish-grey fur; the bands around the upper sleeves are black and the foresleeves are brown (?)velvet. The tablecloth is red, the glove greyish-brown leather; the two rings are gold, the upper being set with a red stone, the lower with a blue jewel. In the lower-right corner is the inventory number 'n88', discussed under Provenance.

THE IDENTITY OF THE SITTER

In 1966 Reis Santos identified the sitter, by comparison with other portraits, as the Portuguese humanist Damião de Góis (1502–1574).¹⁹ This identification was

carried out by GC–MS and FTIR microscopy.

19. L. Reis Santos, 'Portrait vraisemblable de Damien de Goes par Jan Gossaert, de Mabuse', unpublished paper delivered to the XXIX^e Congrès de la Fédération archéologique et historique de Belgique, Bruges, 16–18 September 1966 (a copy of the typescript, without the notes, is at the NG). The summary published in *Handelingen van het Genootschap gesticht onder de benaming Société d'Emulation te Brugge*, vol. CIII, 1966, pp. 301–2, omits the section on NG946.

tentatively accepted by Davies.²⁰

A damaged portrait in high relief of Damião de Góis appears on his monument in the church of S. Maria de Varzea at Alenquer; it shows a man with very differently shaped eye-sockets.²¹ The sitter in NG946 looks a little more like an engraving by Philips Galle, published in 1587 and inscribed: 'DAMIANVS A GOES'; but it is based on a drawn portrait by Dürer which cannot represent Damião as the two never met.²² The resemblances between NG946 and the engraving seem, in any case, to be coincidental. The Mantuan provenance of NG946 might suggest that the sitter was an Italian; but the Dukes of Mantua acquired Netherlandish pictures from many different sources.²³ The dress, particularly the broad black bands around the ends of the pink sleeves, may provide some indication of the sitter's profession.

ATTRIBUTION AND DATE

Attribution

In the collections of Charles I and Charles II, the portrait was unattributed. The attribution to Holbein, first put forward during the reign of James II (1685–8), lasted until 1875. The portrait was first given to Gossart in the National Gallery catalogue of 1877. Friedländer and others have accepted this attribution, though Davies was concerned that 'the hands are rather weak'.²⁴ The hands, however, are similar to those in other portraits by Gossart.²⁵

20. Davies 1968, p. 61.

21. Reproductions in Segurado 1975, plates V-X.

22. For the engraving, published in *Imagines L. doctorum virorum*, Antwerp 1587 (Hollstein, vol. VII, nos 685-734), for the drawing attributed to Dürer (Albertina, Winkler 917) and for related paintings, see Mende 1985.

23. Campbell 1985, pp. xxxvi-xxxviii and references.

24. 1877 catalogue, p. 166; Friedländer, vol. VIII, no. 70; Davies 1968, p. 61.

25. Compare, for example, the *Three Children of Christian II of Denmark* (Windsor) or the *Moscow Portrait of a Man*: Friedländer, vol. VIII, nos 79, Add. 165.

Date

Von der Osten dated the portrait around 1530; Reis Santos placed it between 1530 and 1532.²⁶ The cut of the sitter's beard and the fashion of his hat and clothes suggest a date towards 1530. The fact that both his doublet and his gown are lined with fur probably indicates that the portrait was painted during the winter months. The pose, with the hands resting on a table placed at an angle, recurs in other, undated, portraits by Gossart.²⁷

The portrait is rather small and the panel, though well made, is not radially cut. This is unusual in Gossart's work and in Netherlandish panels of the period, but the painting has survived in good condition and Gossart may have realised that, for a panel of this size, the tangential cut would not cause future problems. Perhaps, since a small panel was selected, neither the sitter nor Gossart was able to spare much time. The speed of execution allows the immense skill of Gossart's brushwork to be admired. Though Charles I did not know who had painted NG946, 'the Picture of an indifferent auncient Gentleman', and though he had no particular sympathy for early Netherlandish art, he chose to place the painting with some of the greatest treasures of his collection in the Cabinet Room at Whitehall.

26. Von der Osten 1961, p. 472; Reis Santos, cited in note 19 above.

27. At Forth Worth and at Williamstown: Friedländer, vol. VIII, nos 52, 57.