

- BERTOLT BRECHT





[FIG. 1] Diego Velázquez, Las Meninas, 1656, oil on canvas, Museo del Prado, Madrid

Portraits of the Habsburg Children

TILL-HOLGER BORCHERT

One of the most famous and most original works in European art history is Velázquez's Las Meninas (Madrid, Museo del Prado, fig. 1). The masterpiece—one of the Prado's star attractions—was painted in 1656. Velázquez, who after a period at the royal court in Madrid during the 1620s had just recently been appointed court painter to Philip IV, appears elegantly dressed in black and with brush and palette in hand. He looks past the canvas, and gazes out of the picture at the viewer. In a mirror mounted among the large-format paintings on the rear wall, we can make out reflections of Philip IV and his second wife, Queen Maria Anna of Austria, likewise a member of the House of Habsburg. The impression is thus at the same time created that Velázquez is at work on a monumental portrait of the Spanish royal couple.¹

In fact, however, the painter's attention is focused upon the group of figures conceived in an anecdotal and remarkably informal manner around the *Infanta* Margaret Theresa. Velázquez grants the most prominent place in the composition to the child situated at the centre of the painting. The five-year-old daughter of the Spanish royal couple appears in the company of her own court circle, consisting of two ladies-in-waiting, two court dwarfs and a watchful sheep dog. She is inquisitively watching the scene that for us—the viewer—remains hidden, while one of her ladies-in-waiting whispers instructions to her.

Velázquez's *Las Meninas* transcends the category of portraiture; it combines the idea of the family portrait with the notion of the artist self-portrait to become the picture of an event, oriented in formal terms to portraiture, but in terms of content, it is related to history painting. At the same time, it testifies to the importance that continued to be attached to portraits of children at the Spanish Habsburg court even in the mid-seventeenth century.

Velázquez had painted the *Infanta* three years prior and would produce her portrait also in the years to come. His pictures of the Spanish *infantes* and *infantas*, of which his workshop produced multiple copies, followed the conventions of portraits of sovereigns. They helped "marketing" princes and princesses, even in childhood, with a view to future marriage alliances advantageous for the Habsburg dynasty.²

lands and those surrounding Margaret to territories in the Burgundian Netherlands.²² One half of the lozenge-shaped shield above Margaret's head has been left blank and was evidently intended to receive her husband's coat of arms after her marriage. The diptych was clearly produced in conjunction with the forthcoming double wedding of the children of Maximilian of Austria and Mary of Burgundy to Juana and Juan, the *infantes* of the Catholic monarchs of Spain, in 1496.²³

In the Vienna version, Maximilian's son and daughter appear against a neutral, dark background. The Habsburg territorial possessions are here proclaimed by inscriptions on the gilded frame, which was originally also decorated with heraldic shields; some of them survive beneath the later gilding. Missing from the Viennese diptych, however, are the arms of alliance above the sitters' heads.²⁴

With its distinctive frame in the shape of a trefoil, the Vienna diptych recalls devotional images. It is also provided the formal model for the individual portraits of Philip the Fair's three eldest children (cat. 5). The inscriptions beneath each child give their age so precisely that we can date the execution of these paintings to between August and November 1502. Each is shown in bust length in line with the decorum of the souvereign's portrait. Since Philip was no longer living in the Netherlands at this time, the children's portraits were probably commissioned by his sister or by Margaret of York. They were executed by an anonymous artist, the Master of the Guild of St George. It is possible that the panels are identical with the child portraits listed in the 1516 inventory of Margaret of Austria's collection.²⁵

In his portrait, the two-and-a-half-year-old Charles appears with the *collana* of the Order of the Golden Fleece. The livery collar also frames the House of Habsburg and Burgundy arms of alliance, crowned by the archducal hat above Charles's head. The portraits of his elder sister Eleonor and the younger Isabella, who is holding a doll, are accompanied at the top by lozenge-shaped shields, whose more prominent, heraldically speaking, right half was reserved for the arms of their future spouses and was consequently left empty.²⁶

The artist, who like Van Coninxloo and the Master of the Magdalen Legend was certainly not the leading artist of his day, represented each child with individualised features—which does not necessarily mean he has captured a good likeness. Although the figures appear stiff, the artist succeeds in conveying a visual impression of the siblings' different temperaments. The portraits must have been well received at the Mechelen court under Margaret of Austria, since the representation of Isabella appears to have served as a model soon afterwards for a picture—today in a private collection—of the new-born Mary, who as Mary of Hungary later became regent of the Netherlands (cat. 42, 43).²⁷

All of Archduke Philip's children were portrayed a few years later in a closely related diptych that was stolen from the collection of the Museo de Santa Cruz in Toledo. On the left wing, the future Emperor Charles appears together with



[FIG. 5] Jean Hey, Portrait of Charles Orland, 1494, oil on panel, Musée du Louvre, Paris



[FIG. 6] Master of the Magdalen Legend, Charles as a seven-year-old with falcon, ca. 1507, oil on panel, KHM Vienna

his younger brother Ferdinand beneath the arms of alliance of Castile-Leon and Habsburg-Burgundy, crowned by the archducal hat. Opposite them on the right-hand wing, beneath the Habsburg/Burgundy arms of alliance, are their four sisters Eleanor, Isabella, Mary (°1505) and Catherine (°1507).²⁸ In 1502, when the

portraits of their older siblings were painted in Mechelen, Ferdinand and the two youngest daughters had not yet been born. An inscription below each likeness gives name, year and place of birth. The exact context of the diptych remain as unclear as does its authorship, but the portraits were based on prototypes by the Master of the Magdalen Legend. The latter's half-length portrait of the seven-year-old Charles with a hunting falcon (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, fig. 6) provided the direct model for the portrait of Charles on the lost Toledo diptych.²⁹

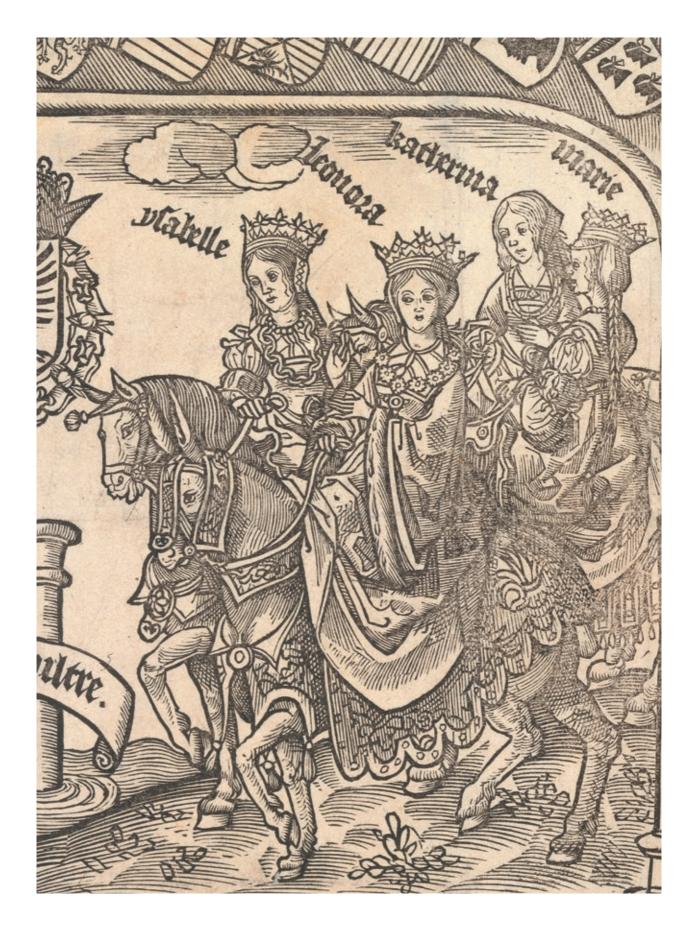
There is no doubt that the Habsburgs attached particular importance to portraits of their progeny, who guaranteed the continuation of the dynasty. It seems that children and grandchildren of the Habsburgs were painted at regular intervals, in pictures that thus document them growing up. It is notable that, from the outset, the choice of artist fell not upon the outstanding masters of the era, but—with Van Coninxloo and the Magdalen Master—upon more conventional painters. One exception might have been a commission issued by Margaret of Austria to Lucas Cranach, during his stay of several months at the Mechelen court in 1508, for a portrait of



[FIG. 7] Lucas Cranach, Johann Friedrich the Magnanimous, 1509, oil on panel, National Gallery, London

her nephew Charles (today lost).³⁰ Cranach, who had been court painter to the Saxon electors since 1505, ranked alongside Dürer as one of the most talented portraitists of his time. With his 1509 double portrait of Elector Johann the Steadfast and his son Johann Friedrich the Magnanimous (fig. 7), he created a particularly sensitive child portrait, which over the course of his long career was to be followed by other portraits of Saxon princes and princesses.³¹

It is noteworthy, at any rate, that the children of Archduke Philip the Handsome were not only raised at different courts, but that their portraits, too, were present in the imperial Habsburg centres of power. Emperor Maximilian commissioned a portrait of his grandson Charles, whom he had designated as his successor after Philip's unexpected death in 1506, from an anonymous Swabian painter (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, fig. 8). The portrait shows a teenage Charles wearing the livery collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece, dressed in a gleaming suit of tournament armour and holding a drawn sword. ³² The armour he wears is probably one of the magnificent suits given to him by his grandfather and ordered by Maximilian between 1512 and 1514. It is possible that



A Court for Children and for Art

The story of mechelen as a centre of education for the house of Habsburg-Burgundy

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takes place almost entirely in the Court of Cambrai, a building on the northeast edge of the city. It is named after its first owner, John of Burgundy, Bishop of Cambrai. Margaret of York moved there in 1477, and in 1486 the city bought the building from her to give it as a residence to the then eight-year-old Philip the Handsome. Three consecutive generations of Burgundian-Habsburg princes and princesses would live and be raised there: Philip and his sister Margaret; from 1501 the children of Philip and Joanna of Castile: Eleanor (°1498), Charles (°1500), Isabella (°1501) and Mary (°1505). From 1518 Ferdinand (°1503), who was born and raised in Spain, also lived there for some time. After Isabella's death in 1526, her children with Christian II, king of Denmark and Norway were also brought to Mechelen, and they spent several years at the Court of Cambrai. The children were served by a large court under the supervision of a 'gouverneur'.

Almost all the Burgundian-Habsburg children who lived in the Court of Cambrai were painted during their stay in Mechelen. These portraits were mainly commissioned by Margaret of York and Margaret of Austria who, from the Court of Savoy, on the other side of the street, oversaw the children's education. The court arranged for portraits to be made by prominent painters associated with the Burgundian-Habsburg court, such as the Master of the Mechelen Guild of St George, Pieter van Coninxloo, the Master of the Magdalene Legend and Jan Gossart. The surviving children's portraits offer a unique overview of the evolution of early childhood portraiture between the end of the fifteenth and the first decades of the sixteenth century. [SM]

[cat. 4]

MASTER OF THE MAGDALEN LEGEND (workshop)

Portrait of Philip the Handsome as a Young Man ca. 1492-94

Oil on panel, 24.5×15.5 cm 's-Heerenberg, Huis Bergh, inv.no. 740

In 1494, 16-year-old Philip the Handsome was declared of age and inaugurated as Duke of the Burgundian patrimonial lands. The revolt against the regency of his father, Maximilian, who succeeded Frederick III as Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 1493, had ended two years prior. Several portraits of Philip as an adolescent from this key period have been preserved.

This painting of the young duke, that could be based on a lost original, shows characteristic features of Dutch portraiture of the time: the figure shown from the waist up, turned three-quarters to the left, the evenly painted background, the calm expression on the young man's face, and the hands that rest on the lower edge of the frame. Philip wears a wine-red tabard with slit sleeves and a fur collar. Underneath, a blue jerkin and a gold-embroidered shirt are visible. The golden chain with a ram's fleece insignia confirms his status as sovereign of the Order of the Golden Fleece. In his left hand he holds a rolled-up piece of parchment, a conventional attribute in Burgundian state portraits that was supposed to reflect the duke's erudition, zeal and administrative prowess.

In 1492, the education of Philip, who grew up at the court of Margaret of York in Mechelen, was entrusted to Frans van Busleyden, later Archbishop of Besançon. Shortly afterwards, this tutor acquired a large house in the city on the river Dyle, which his younger brother Jeroen would later expand into the Hof van Busleyden. Until his death in 1502, Frans van Busleyden exerted a considerable influence on the young duke, who, under his instigation (and in spite of his warmongering father Maximilian), pursued a peaceful and pro-French course. This painting of Philip the Handsome circa 1492–94, dates from these formative years.



[FIG. 1] Jacques le Boucq, Portrait of Philip the Handsome (drawing from the Recueil d'Arras, fol. 67), ca. 1567, paper. Arras, Bibliothèque municipale.

The portrait is traditionally attributed to the highly productive workshop of the Master of the Magdalen Legend, an anonymous painter who must have been active in the vicinity of the Burgundian court. Princely portraits like this were often produced in great numbers and exchanged with or sold to political allies who wanted to show their allegiance to the ducal power. The current painting—or another version of it—was incidentally the model for the portrait of Philip the Handsome in the *Recueil d'Arras* (ca. 1567), a manuscript containing drawings of famous men and women from European history. (fig.1). [DVH]

Literature: Onghena 1959, pp. 78-80, No. 6; 's-Hertogenbosch 1990, vol. 1, p. 112, No. 57; Kutsch Lojenga-Rietberg 2000, p. 33; Haarlem / Antwerp 2000, pp. 86-87, No. 1; Bruges / Madrid 2006, pp. 70, 266; De Win 2009, pp. 77-87, 97-98.



[cat. 9]

BERNARD VAN ORLEY (after)

Portrait of Margaret of Austria after 1518

Oil on panel, 37.1 × 27.5 cm Brussels, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, inv. 4059

In this portrait, of which several copies exist, Margaret of Austria (1480-1530) is depicted in the widow's attire that she always wore after the death of her third husband, Philibert of Savoy. The prototype of this portrait, developed by the Brussels painter Bernard van Orley,1 who entered Margaret's service on 23 May 1508, was copied several times, both in his studio and by other artists. These stereotypical depictions, approved by the court, presented the official self-image that Margaret wished to display to the outside world. By being portrayed as a widow, she indicated that she was independent and free from a husband's influence.2 In the Brussels portrait, the severity of the widow's cap and black gown is softened by the ermine-lined sleeves, emphasising her high rank.

On 18 March 1507, Margaret was appointed Governor of the Netherlands by her father, Emperor Maximilian. Immediately afterwards she was given custody of the children of her brother, Philip the Handsome, who died in Burgos in September 1506. She established her court in Mechelen. It was there that she raised her cours in Charles (later Charles V) and his sisters, Eleanor, Isabella and Mary. Ferdinand, Charles' younger brother who was born in Spain, remained there with his grandfather Ferdinand of Aragon, and Catharine, the youngest sister born after Philip's death, lived with her mother, Joanna of Castile, in the palace of Tordesillas.

Charles and his sisters lived at the Court of Cambrai, the palace of Margaret of York, which was opposite Margaret's residence, the Court of Savoy.³ They benefited from the flourishing climate of arts and sciences, and humanist leanings that Margaret cultivated at her court. When Charles was declared of age in 1515, Margaret was relegated

to the side-lines. But when he went to claim his father's inheritance in Spain in 1516, he needed her again and entrusted her with governorship over the Netherlands. It was probably on this occasion that she commissioned her court painter Van Orley to make an official portrait, as a sign of her regained power. Her account books show that Van Orley was paid for three such portraits in 1519 and two such portraits in 1520, and that in 1532 the payment of seven more was arranged. 4 Margaret distributed these portraits amongst her entourage and also left one in the convent of the Order of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Bruges.⁵ What was originally painted to serve a political purpose eventually became a commemorative portrait. [VB]

Literature: Galand 2013, pp. 300–311; Brussels 2019, p. 156.

- For a detailed study of the panel, see Galand et al. 2013, pp. 300–311 (with bibliography).
- 2. Galand 2019, p. 156.
- 3. De Jong 2005, p. 59.
- 4. Galand 2013, doc. 11 and 13, pp. 406-407.
- 5. Girault 2018, p. 136.



[cat. 15-17]

JAKOB SEISENEGGER

Portrait of Archduchess Elisabeth of Austria at the age of four 1530

> Oil on panel, 43 × 34.7 cm Signed with monogram: *IS* in ligature Mauritshuis, The Hague, inv. no. 269

Portrait of Archduchess Anna of Austria at the age of two 1530

Oil on panel, 44.7×34.8 cm Signed with monogram: IS in ligature Mauritshuis, The Hague, inv. no. 270

Portrait of Archduke Maximilian of Austria at the age of three 1530

> Oil on panel, 43 × 34.4 cm Signed with monogram: *IS* in ligature Mauritshuis, The Hague, inv. no. 271

Very little is known about Jakob Seisenegger's background and training. His career was launched at the 1530 Reichstag, a political summit regularly convened by the Habsburgs at Augsburg, and which lasted six months that year, from June to November. During this interval, Ferdinand I, King of the Romans, commissioned Seisenegger to paint his children, but it is not documented how the two men met or were introduced. A surviving receipt drawn up by Seisenegger later in 1535 records the portrayals he had executed there of four children of Ferdinand I and his wife Anna, Queen of Bohemia and Hungary. Three of the four children: Elisabeth (inv. 269), Maximilian (inv. 271), Anna (inv. 270) are exhibited here, the fourth of the then youngest boy, Ferdinand, is now lost.

Seisenegger's receipt provides insightful details about these portraits and their preparation (Birk 1856, p. 72). The painter 'paid a carpenter in advance for the four wooden panels supported on the reverse' (with wooden strips), each panel equipped with 'wooden covers' (now missing). Without the help of a workshop assistant, Seisenegger noted that he laboriously prepared each panel himself, sizing each with glues, resins and gesso, which required each layer to be sanded down, as well as grinding the pigments he needed to paint them (die tafeln leimgetrenckht, grundt und farben und anders geriben und zugericht). He expected in 1535 to be reimbursed by Ferdinand I for his expenses paid out of pocket, charging him 28 gulden for all four panels.

Instead of buying prepared panels at an artist's studio in Augbsurg, Seisenegger preferred to supervise every detail of this commission himself. It was hard work but his time, patience and investment served him well. Ferdinand appointed Seisenegger his court painter, one year later, in Prague in 1531. This was the beginning of a long, successful and international career Seisenegger carved out for himself at the Habsburg court in Vienna. In the service of Ferdinand I, who later became Holy Roman Emperor in 1556, Seisenegger travelled widely and over great distances. His journeys took him to Italy, Spain and the Netherlands, across Central Europe, where he was active at the court cities of Innsbruck, Vienna and Prague, until his death in 1567. He became the favourite portraitist at the Habsburg court, painting at Bologna in 1532 the now famous, full-length portrait of Emperor Charles V, which transformed court portraiture after this date (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. no. GG A104). Seisenegger's portrait subsequently served as a model for the replica Titian painted in 1533 (Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, inv. no. P000409).

Max Friedländer was the first to attribute the three Mauritshuis children's portraits to Jakob Seisenegger, which until 1895 were formerly thought to have been executed by Barthel Beham (Friedländer 1895, pp. 272–273). Friedländer noted as well that they formed a small series, together with the now-lost fourth portrayal of Archduke Ferdinand. The three surviving panels are almost identical in size, with Seisenegger adopting the



[CAT. 15]

[cat. 21]

JUAN DE FLANDES

Portrait of an Infanta ca. 1496

Oil on panel, 31.5 × 21.7 cm Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid Inv. 141 (1930.36)

This small, bust-length portrait depicts an adolescent girl, one of the four daughters of the Catholic Kings, Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon, and has been attributed to the Flemish painter active at Isabella's court since 1496, Juan de Flandes. The identity of the sitter has been much contested, with scholars proposing either Juana (1479–1555), later Queen of Castile and wife of the Habsburg Archduke Philip the Handsome, or Maria (1482–1517), Queen of Portugal and second wife of Manuel I, as the sitter.

It has also been previously thought this girl may represent Catherine of Aragon, later wife of King Henry VIII of England (1485–1536). Glück proposed this princess because of the rose she holds, suggesting it represented the Tudor rose, referencing her first marriage to Arthur Tudor, Prince of Wales, in 1501. However, with no heraldic arms present, there is no argument to believe this is the case. He likewise posited the sitter could be Maria of Castile.

The small, budding red rose the girl elegantly holds with the index and thumb of her right hand can also signify love and therefore this portrayal can be interpreted as a pre-nuptial portrait commissioned by the Catholic kings for the purposes of securing a future dynastic alliance for the young *infanta*. The rose symbolises the purity of the Virgin Mary and may well allude to this girl's name (Maria), as well as her own maidenhood and virginity as a prospective bride.

If this sitter is Maria, Isabella's fourth daughter, she would have been fourteen years of age at the time this portrait was made. Contemporaries described Maria as pale and thin with a receding chin and a serious, reticent personality, all of which are reflected here in this princess' demeanour. Her simple white dress is accentuated at the neck-

line and upper sleeves with intricate gold and red embroidery on black cloth. The *infanta* is modestly coifed, her long braid tied to her head with a white ribbon. For a portrait commissioned to seal a royal marriage, the costume selected is surprising, as usually intended brides were depicted in sumptuous outfits, wearing priceless gems and jewellery. Isabella's court was a splendid one; the queen and her daughters are known to have worn magnificent dresses and rich jewels.

Flandes opted here instead for a simplicity of details and few attributes, complemented by the demure, reflective visage of the princess, who looks out beyond the viewer. She is positioned very close to the foreground plane, framed by a play of light and shadows, set against a green background. The painter focused on the delicate features of her long, oval face.

Maria of Castile married Manuel I by proxy at Granada in September of 1500 before moving to Portugal. There are no extant portraits of Maria as queen painted at the Lisbon court, despite prestigious painters documented there in the service, the Portuguese king, such as the Flemish miniaturist, Antonio de Holanda (ca. 1480–ca. 1556), who executed small-scale portraits and miniatures. Surviving inventories of the collections of Manuel I and Maria do not cite any portraits by Juan de Flandes, although it is known many portrait replicas by his workshop were made for distribution to courts in England, Portugal, Spain and the Netherlands.

The attribution of this portrait to Juan de Flandes was first made by Max J. Friedländer in 1930. Gustav Glück followed suit in 1931, comparing it to the pendant portrayals of the archducal couple Juana of Castile and Philip the Handsome in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, confirming the stylistic similarities between the three panels (inv. nos. GG 3873 and GG 3872, respectively).

Flandes was expressively brought to Spain by the Catholic Kings to paint their royal children and this particular portrait remains one of his most sensitive representations. [AJG]

Literature: Glück 1931, pp. 313–317; Ebbinge-Wubben 1971, pp. 195–198, cat. 147.



[cat. 53]

JAN VAN BEERS Charles V as a Child 1879

Oil on canvas, 143 × 151 × 3 cm KMSKA, inv. 2326

Slouched somewhat listlessly in an oversized armchair, bolstered by a velvet pillow, feet resting on another richly embroidered cushion, his left arm lifeless on the back of a dog, gazing at the viewer with a gloomy, even somewhat sad expression, is how Jan Van Beers portrays the young Charles V. The child exudes little energy or zest for life. The dog, with its front paw raised, looks at the child with an expression akin to love. The faithful beast radiates more life than the boy. A closed book lies carelessly on the floor. Judging by the position of the ribbon bookmark, the book is being read. By the child? As part of his education? The worn corners of the binding imply that the book has already been used intensively. A faded tapestry and a green-velvet curtain close off the back wall.

Depictions of Emperor Charles were not unusual in the nineteenth century. They fit into the romantic *zeitgeist* and contributed to the glorification of national history. However, this work is not characteristic of that Romantic movement. It is clearly not intended to present the future patriotic hero with much seriousness and conviction. It is not a lofty event, not an important moment in the life of the later, great statesman, but a scene plucked from the child's daily life. A very atypical representation.

What was Van Beers attempting to achieve with this painting? Did he want to make the viewer consider the destiny lying in wait for the child? Was he aiming for a psychological portrait of the young Charles? Or, with this choice of subject was he trying to capitalise on the trend of painting historical scenes, while still doing his own thing with them? Regardless, art critics thought Van Beers' work was odd to say the least. On seeing the work presented at the Paris Salon of 1880, the reviewer of the Nieuwe Amsterdamsche Courant. Algemeen Handelsblad

commented: 'Jan van Beers, well known in Holland, remains a remarkable artist. His Charles Quint as a child is so strange and peculiar, yet painted with such technical finesse that one has to admire it *malgré-soi*.'

In his own day, Van Beers was described as a flamboyant character who craved publicity and was not afraid of scandal. Or, as the Nieuwe Amsterdamsche Courant. Algemeen Handelsblad wrote in 1880, the year in which the painting Charles V as a Child made its first public appearance: 'Van Beers clearly needs to cause a sensation, to hear everyone cry out with astonishment: how is it possible for someone to paint in a style so entirely different?' Was appearing 'so entirely different' the effect Van Beers was also after with Charles V as a Child? This painting was also his last historical piece. From then on, he turned to more mundane, accessible, even somewhat banal subjects, such as portraits and genre scenes, which appealed to the Parisian beau-monde, and which showcased the eccentric painter's vision. From 1880 on, Van Beers' style was so detailed and realistic that contemporary art connoisseurs openly accused him of resorting to photography, claiming that he painted a picture over a photograph and presented the work as an actual, original painting.

Charles V as a Child leans towards this stylistic approach—the virtuoso technique and photographic style that we also see in Van Beers' portraits of contemporaries. The composition of the piece also reinforces a connection with contemporary photography. The pose recalls post-mortem photographs of deceased children, a popular genre in photography at the time: the little corpse, dressed in finery and often propped up in a chair positioned in a cramped corner. Was Van Beers aware of that similarity? More than a depiction of a historical figure in a historically accurate setting, this painting is a contemporary children's portrait overlaid with an historical veneer. [BS]

Literature: Tu. 1880, p. 2; De Mont 1901, pp. 71–86; Ghent 1999b, pp. 122–129; Huvenne et al. 2003, p. 150; Great 2005; Lier 2016; Monteyne 2016, pp. 23–27.

