



Painters of the Italian Renaissance and Dutch 17th Century:
*A Comparison Between
Sofonisba Anguissola and Judith Leyster*

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Tutor: Everhard Korthals Altes
Student: Daphne Naaktgeboren
Student number: 4678818
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1. Introduction

Recently, in the field of arts, much research has been done regarding female artists in general. This research is mostly focused on the missing recognition for these artists in general and how they are compared to their male counterparts. In this thesis, the focus is placed on two female artists in two specific time periods. The goal is not to make a comparison between them and male painters, but to compare them to each other and examine what makes them the painters that they were.

The two eras that have been selected are the Italian Renaissance and the Dutch 17th century. The choice was made to select these two periods for multiple reasons. First, a lot of extensive research has been done into both of these periods. This provides a solid information source to be able to sketch the societal circumstances. Secondly, both periods are periods of prosperity. Not only in terms of wealth but also in culture, science and the arts. The Italian Renaissance (+- 14th to 17th century) and the Dutch 17th-century overlap in part and both take place in the western world. This overlap is slim since the peak of the Italian Renaissance is placed around 1500. The Italian Renaissance does however span a large period and started roughly three centuries before the 17th Dutch century. This difference in time makes it compatible for a comparison. A change in the role of female artists could potentially be perceived. Finally, these two periods were chosen, because they span a bigger period with a homogeneous character on the subject of art. By this, it is meant that other periods, such as from the 19th century and up, give us more fragmentation. More styles and art movements arise, making it difficult to compare two specific periods to each other.

As is mentioned in the first paragraph of this introduction, the focus of this thesis will be put on two female artists. Following the choice of the Italian Renaissance and the Dutch 17th century as periods, Sofonisba Anguissola (as a representative of the Italian Renaissance) and Judith Leyster (as a representative of the Dutch 17th century) are chosen. Anguissola and Leyster are both well-known artists of their period. Much research has been done into their lives and works, which provides ample source material for this thesis. It is to be remarked that both women and the periods are located in different countries. This might affect the comparison since Italian female artists in the 17th century might paint differently from the Dutch female artists at the time and vice versa.

Information on both the periods and artists will be combined into the following research question:

How did Sofonisba Anguissola's work and accomplishments in the artistic world of the Italian Renaissance compare to Judith Leyster's work and accomplishments in the Dutch 17th century?

As an architecture student myself, practising in this creative field, it interests me to see how women in the past have functioned in a similar field. Since more attention in research is being paid to the role of female artists compared to male artists (and their recognition for their work), it interests me to approach the role of female artists from a different perspective. The aim of this thesis is to focus on the women themselves and their work.

This thesis will consist of a literature study, collecting information about women in both periods and the periods themselves. Thereafter a comparison will be made between the works of Sofonisba Anguissola and Judith Leyster. The paintings have been selected to span a different range of subjects to represent the broad spectrum of subjects that Anguissola and Leyster painted, while also being selected on their similarity and therefore suitability for comparison.

2. Sofonisba Anguissola and the Italian Renaissance

Sofonisba was born in Cremona to her parents Amilcare Anguissola and Bianca Ponzone and had five sisters and one brother: Elena, Lucia, Minerva, Europe, Asdrubale and Anna Maria. Her date of birth is generally placed in 1532, but some debate has surrounded this. Sofonisba's father made sure that his daughters were taught how to read and perform. In the end, Amilcare decided to have Sofonisba and Elena professionally educated by painter Bernardino Campi (1522-1591) from 1546 till 1549 and from 1550 onwards by Bernardino Gatti (Cole, 2020, p. 19-21). This was an exceptional decision since it was not custom for noble families to send their children to be an apprentice, let alone for daughters of these families. Burke (1986, p. 43) mentions there is a bias toward gender, geographical location and size of a person's hometown whether or not someone was more likely to become an artist.

The Anguissola family did not have great financial means, but still had ties to nobility through their family names. In many of her paintings, Anguissola used the word *virgo* in the inscriptions on her paintings, to convey the fact that she was chaste and still living in her father's house (Cole, 2020, p. 25). There was a pride in her family name, which for instance becomes clear in her using her surname Anguissola when signing her paintings and her adding the surname of her second husband Lomellino to the Anguissola name (Cole, 2020).

Anguissola's father sent much of her work to different men and women of power (Cole, 2020, p. 21). In 1559 she became a painter at the court of Phillip II (1527-1598) in Madrid, not only as a painter but also as a companion to his new young bride, Elisabeth de Valois (1545- 1568), after a request from the duke of Alba, Fernando Álvarez de Toledo (1507-1582). Anguissola is not only praised for the work she produced while at court, but also for her contributions to the development of self-portraits and the independent family portrait (Cole, 2020). Vasari (1511-1574) mentions and praises Anguissola as one of only four women in his series of biographies *The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* in the chapter on Properzia de Rossi, a sculptress from Bologna, with the following words:

“But Sofonisba of Cremona, the daughter of Messer Amilcaro Anguiscuiola, has laboured at the difficulties of design with greater study and better grace than any other woman of our time, and she has not only succeeded in drawing, colouring and copying from nature, and in making excellent copies of works by other hands but has also executed by herself alone some very choice and beautiful works of painting.”

After living at court for a while, she first married Don Fabrizio de Moncada, which was arranged by Spanish court. He was a Sicilian nobleman and they moved to Palermo. Later, when he had passed, she met Orazio Lomellini, who was a nobleman from Genoa and the captain of her boat to Cremona. They settled in Genoa and she established a school of painting. In 1620, she moved back to Palermo and lived there until she died in 1625. She also became a tutor to the Flemish painter Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641) there (Fortune, 2009, p. 146).

Among the different authorities on her work, there have been very divergent views on which paintings should be attributed to Anguissola. She did not sign much of her work, therefore only around ten paintings contain uncontested signatures, others are attributed to her based on descriptions by contemporaries or are based on comparison to the uncontested works (Cole, 2020, p. 11).

3. Judith Leyster and the Dutch 17th Century

Judith was baptised in 1609 as the daughter of Jan Willemsen and Trijn Jaspers. The family name Leyster was later adapted from the brewery in Haarlem that her father owned (Hofrichter, 1989, pp. 13). The family consisted of nine children in total, of whom Judith was the second to last. The family lived in comfort, until Leyster's father's bankruptcy in 1625, after which, in 1628, her parents left Haarlem.

There is not one definite scenario that describes Leyster's training. In one scenario she worked at Frans Pieterszoon de Grebber's shop, moved away from Haarlem with her parents, returned in 1629 and started her studies at Frans Hals's shop. Another scenario puts her in Frans Hals's shop from the beginning (Hofrichter, 1989, pp. 14). What is clear is that she became part of the Saint Lucas Gilde in Haarlem in 1633 as the first woman, from that moment on she could have her own shop and educate her own students. Most of her paintings were created in the period of 1629-1636 until she married Jan Miense Molenaer (c. 1610-1668). Leyster as a painter was operating in a society that had changed, the Republic of the United Netherlands had recently originated and it was becoming a powerful and economically successful state. At the beginning of the 17th century, it was no longer the church and court that were the patrons of the arts, but it was the middle class, regular civilians (Biesboer, 1993, pp. 11). Schama (1988, pp. 323) mentions how visitors of Holland are surprised that almost everyone in Amsterdam has some type of art on their wall, even simple craftsmen. It was this new class of traders, lower officials and notaries that would make up a large part of the painter's clientele.

Bredius (1917) gives an interesting insight into Leyster's character, discussing how there was an incident between her and Frans Hals. A student of hers, Willem Wouterszoon, decided to leave his position with Leyster and apply for the same position in Frans Hals's studio, who accepted him without following the right procedures of the gild. She demanded a fee from his mother for the time that he had been her student. It tells us that Leyster was not afraid to stand up for herself.

After Leyster married Molenaer, who was also a painter from Haarlem, the couple moved to Amsterdam. Few works by her own hand are known from this period onwards. She and Molenaer had five children in total, which would have had an impact on her possibility to continue painting. She did also find a way to incorporate art into her life at home by for instance drawing illustrations of tulips in 1643, as seen in figure 1. Whether Leyster collaborated with her husband on paintings after their marriage is not known, it is possible, but there is no documented evidence to support this. She might have had to assist Molenaer, as the demand for paintings because of her husband's poor financial management skills was high (Hofrichter, 1989, pp. 18).

Leyster's skills as a painter were recognised by contemporaries, such as Theodorus Schrevelius (1572-1649) who wrote the following about Leyster in his *Harlemias* (1648, pp 443):

“Daar zyn ook verscheide Vrouwen geweest in de Schilderkunst wel ervaren, die voornamentlyk in onze tyd noch vermaard zyn en die men zou kunnen stellen met de Mannen egaal in kunst: van welke eene inzonderheid uitmunt, Judith Leyster, wel eer genaamt; de regte Leyster in de kunst....”

In this, he praises Leyster and female painters in general who he perceives to be equal to men in the arts. Especially the part *“.. de regte Leyster in de kunst..”* translated to ‘the true Leyster in the arts’ is of interest. Hofrichter (1989, pp 13) describes the meaning of Leyster as a leading star or Pole star. With this Schrevelius indicated Leyster as the leading star of the arts. This appreciation of Leyster's work also becomes clear in the fact that both David Bailly and Dirck Hals incorporated works of Leyster into their paintings (Hofrichter, 1989, pp. 37, 41).

The fact remains that, though praised in her own time, for a long time Leyster was relatively unknown, her work was attributed to others. Hofrichter describes how Cornelis Hofsteede de Groot (1863-1930) was the first in 1893 to publish a study of her work, 233 years after she had passed away, in which he also mentions her relation to Frans Hals and states: *“.. non of his students comes closer to him than she does.”* (Hofsteede de Groot, 1893).



Fig. 1 De vroege Brabantsson. 1643. Judith Leyster. Displayed in Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, The Netherlands as a part of the *Tulpenboek*. (Vereniging Rembrandt, n.d.)

4. Comparison between the works of Sofonisba Anguissola and Judith Leyster

Both Anguissola and Leyster have produced multiple paintings during their career. In the case of Leyster, some paintings have been known to be only later accredited to her and were accredited to other painters at first. Some of the paintings currently accredited to Leyster are debatable, therefore the chosen paintings for the following comparison are the paintings that are accredited to her with certainty. In the case of Anguissola, there has been more debate on different attributions, since not many of her works contain a signature.

A selection of five paintings by both painters has been made to create the comparison. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, these have been selected based on their themes, to maximize the compatibility of the paintings. The subjects have been chosen to be as broad as possible, in order to portray the extensive portfolio of both painters. The following subjects have been chosen:

1. Self-portrait
2. En Profil Portrait
3. Portrait of Children and Animals
4. Paintings of multiple figures and games
5. Portrait of a woman

Each category will be discussed with the following structure: First Anguissola's work will be discussed, followed by Leyster's work. Thereafter both paintings will be compared to each other. Each painting will first be analysed by an objective and factual description of the paintings, without the knowledge of background information. After this first analysis, the background of the paintings will be discussed and therefore the meaning behind the painting will be further elaborated on. This will be concluded with a comparison between both paintings for each subchapter.

4.1. Self-portrait

4.1.1 Sofonisba Anguissola: Self-Portrait at the easel



Fig. 2 Self-portrait at the easel. 1556. Sofonisba Anguissola. Displayed in Łańcut Castle, Poland.
Panel dimensions: 66 x 57 cm
(RKD, n.d.)

Analysis

This painting shows one figure, in this case, Anguissola herself since this is a self-portrait. She depicts herself painting another painting depicting a woman and a child and is looking directly towards the viewer. She is holding brushes and a stick to rest her hand on (a version of a mahl stick). The used palette with paint is visible in front of the canvas. The scene gives the viewer the idea that we as viewers have just stepped into her studio, where she is looking up at us. Her clothing is however of great quality, it is not clothing you would expect a person to be wearing during 'dirty work' such as painting.

The portrait is lit up by a spotlight coming from the front right direction, therefore partly casting a shadow upon her face, just like her hand is casting a shadow upon her easel. The background is painted in a dark, warm brown tint, similar to that of her dress. Because of this similarity, the dress merges into the background. Anguissola's pale face contrasts with the dark colours of the background and her dress, therefore making her face the focal point of the painting. The other focal point of the composition is the painting that she is creating herself.

A lot of attention has been paid to detail in the scene, not in the least because she has painted a whole different painting in the painting. She uses highlights to create the shimmering surface of her dress and highlight her braids. The detailing on the clothing is further extended to the fringed collars, their ruffled characteristics clearly visible. Anguissola paints small highlights in her eyes, giving them a realistic appearance. She also uses the highlights to convey materiality, which is most clearly visible in the mahl stick she is using and her fingernails. The shine that arises conveys the smoothness of the surface.

Information about the painting

This example of a self-portrait is one of many by Anguissola's hand, Cole (2020, p. 2) states that '*...she painted more self-portraits than any European artist in the century that separated Dürer and Rembrandt*'. The way in which she has positioned herself was not new in her time. Renaissance artists often used a right-angle mirror representation, for which they placed a mirror at a ninety-degree angle to their canvas, this can be seen in a portrait made at the beginning of the 16th century (Fried, 2010, p. 18). What was innovative about this painting is that Anguissola depicted herself in the process of painting, holding her brush and mahlstick, the portrait she is painting visible. This was presumably first seen in 1555 when Alessandro Alloru painted his *Self-Portrait*, in which his brush was visible (Fried, 2010, p. 19).

As stated in the personal analyses of the painting, Sofonisba depicts herself in clothing of quality, but the colours of the fabrics are reserved. Garrard (1994, p. 583) described how Anguissola paints herself in this muted colour palette in many of her self-portraits, she '*...fashioned herself - presumably in life as well as art - as a dignified, serious and self-possessed woman*'. However, Garrard based this statement on, amongst others, the painting 'Bernardino Campi Painting Sofonisba Anguissola. After 1994, when the article was written, the painting was restored and it was revealed that Anguissola was originally depicted wearing a bright red coloured, decorated dress, which was painted over by another restorer (Cole, 2020, p. 52). This touches upon the fact that of many paintings, there are no records if these paintings have been altered.



Fig. 3 On the left the painting 'Bernardino Campi Painting Sofonisba Anguissola' before restoration, on the right the painting after restoration. The arm was later painted over again, to leave only one arm visible. (Upton, 2019)

In her self-portrait, Anguissola depicts herself using a mahl stick to steady her painting hand. She only paints herself using this tool in her earlier self-portraits and does not in her later portraits, when she has gained experience as a painter (Garrard, 1994, p. 564). This painting has been dated to 1556 when Anguissola would have been approximately 24.

The subject of Anguissola's painting is a depiction of a woman and her child, presumably Mary and Christ. She could have chosen this specific subject as a reference to the evangelist Luke, who, according to legend, has painted Mary and Christ and was seen as the patron of the arts. Anguissola could have chosen to identify herself with the evangelist, by placing herself in his shoes and at the same time showing her knowledge of theological history. She may have also chosen to portray this subject since Mary is known for her virtuousness and piety and therefore identifies herself with these characteristics (Hull, 2014).

4.1. Self-portrait

4.1.2 Judith Leyster: Self-Portrait



Fig. 4 Self-portrait. 1630. Judith Leyster. Displayed in The National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C, United States of America.
Panel dimensions: 74.6 x 65.1 cm
(National Gallery of Art, n.d.)

Analysis

As this is a self-portrait, the figure depicted in the painting is Leyster herself. She portrays herself in the process of painting a man playing an instrument. She is leaning back on a chair and smiling up at the viewer. Her posture is casual, she paints herself as if she is just about to speak to the viewer. Leyster is holding a brush in her right hand and a palette and multiple brushes in her left hand. She is wearing an elaborate outfit, including a round collar, clothing that would not necessarily be expected to be worn when painting.

A modest colour palette is used, certain colours do stand out in the painting, but are not bright. The most remarkable colours are those of Leyster's skirt and sleeve and the blue colours of the painted musician's clothing. The background is painted in a grey and green tint, showing a transition from dark on the left side of the painting to light on the right side. The largest part of Leyster's dress consists of a dark colour, which contrasts with the white collar and bonnet that she is wearing. The painting on the right side of the painting almost merges with the background, since the colour tones are quite similar. The consequence of this is that Leyster herself comes forward in the painting and forms the centre of the painting.

The portrait is illuminated from the left side. Consequently, Leyster's body casts a shadow on the painting behind her. Her face is almost fully exposed to the light, but a subtle shadow is visible on her left side. Shadows are also visible in the palm of her hand, providing depth. She uses highlights throughout the painting to, among other things, convey the materialization of the wooden chair, letting the smooth surface shine with small highlights. This is also subtly applied to the paintbrush, as is shown in the detail of the painting in figure 5. Another example of these subtle highlights is visible in her eyes, where the slightest white dot can be distinguished, conveying the reflection in her eyes.

This attention to detail is also visible in the lace edges of her collar and the golden hem on the sleeve of her dress. The fragile lace at the end of her sleeve is painted as a very thin, seethrough layer on top of her sleeve. In other parts of the painting, she is however working with a coarse brushstroke, which is visible in the pleating of her skirt.



Fig. 5 Detail of the painting 'Selfportrait'

Information about the painting

Leyster was quite young when she painted this self-portrait, only 19 or 20 years of age. Therefore it is remarkable how she portrays herself, seeming very relaxed and confident. Biesboer (1993, p. 162) mentions how she portrays herself as '*...a self-aware, young artist, dressed according to the latest fashion and showing her work with pride, which creates the image of a modern artist...*'. Her relaxed pose, leaning on the edge of the chair, slightly turned towards the spectator is probably inspired by her presumed former tutor, Frans Hals. He is perceived as the first person to apply this pose to his portraits. (Biesboer, 1993, p. 162).

The painting that Leyster is working on, is an excerpt of an existing piece, painted by her as well. The title of the work is '*Merry Company*', which she painted around 1629 and depicts a musician and two other men enjoying themselves, while others peek around the corner of the door (figure 6). Musicians are a recurrent theme in Leyster's paintings. A notable discovery was done when an infrared scan was made of Leyster's self-portrait, namely that the scene that she is painting was once something else than a man playing the violin. This infrared scan is depicted in figure 7. It shows a girl's face, but something would have made Leyster decide to paint a different subject on her canvas. Wheelock (2014) suggests, in his entry accompanying the painting for the National Gallery of Art, how this portrait might have been a portrait of Leyster herself, following the iconographic tradition of portraits. Wheelock supports Hofrichter's (as cited in Biesbioer 1993, p.166) suggestion that Leyster may have chosen to paint the violin player, because of the success of the painting or to show her ability to paint not only portraits but also genre scenes. He however disagrees with Hofrichter's remark that this self-portrait could have been a presentation piece from when Leyster was entering the Haarlem Saint Luke's Guild in 1633. He argues that her clothing is of an earlier date, the manner in which she has painted herself does not compare to her other paintings of this period and that choosing an excerpt of her painting '*Merry Company*' for her admission into the guild would not be logical, since the '*Merry Company*' would have been an older painting of hers by that time.



Fig. 6 Merry Company. c.1629. Judith Leyster. Private collection.
(Christie's, 2018)

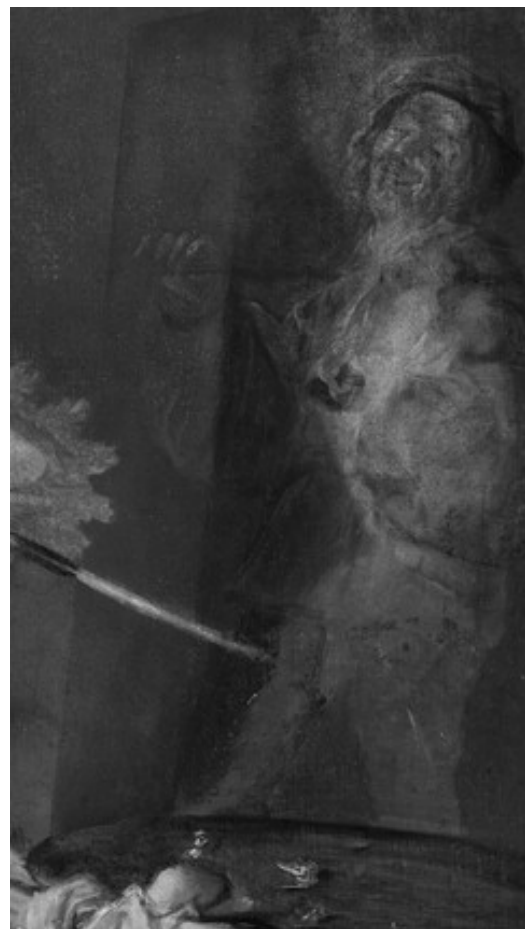


Fig. 7 Infrared reflectogram of 'Self-Portrait' by
Judith Leyster.
(National Gallery of Art, n.d.)

4.1.3 Comparison between ‘Self-portrait at the easel’ and ‘Self-Portrait’



Self-portrait at the easel. 1556. Sofonisba Anguissola.
(RKD, n.d.)



Self-portrait. 1630. Judith Leyster. (National Gallery of Art, n.d.)

In the book *‘Schilderes in een mannenwereld’* Anguissola’s self-portrait is referred to when discussing Leyster’s Self-Portrait at the easel. It is mentioned that Leyster’s portrait was based on previous traditional prototypes. Anguissola is described as an example of a female artist painting herself sitting in front of the easel, dressed in fine clothes. Anguissola and Leyster both depict themselves well dressed, not in clothing suitable for painting. This is done more often by artists, to show their artistry and to alleviate the art of painting from the crafts. Anguissola could have been a potential role model or inspirational source for Leyster (Biesboer, 1993, p. 164). Though, it has to be noted, that there is no evidence that Leyster would have seen Anguissola’s self-portrait in real life and it would not be likely.

Both painters depicted themselves in similar ways. As mentioned, both could have been inspired by the story of the evangelist Luke painting Mary and Christ as a reference to their patron of the arts. Though, both could also have been inspired by other artists, painting portraits in similar settings. Anguissola does depict, presumably, Mary and Christ, and therefore does refer back to a widely painted subject. Leyster however depicts herself painting her own work.

Style-wise, the composition is similar in setup, but there is a clear difference in posture and overall painting technique. It has to be taken into account, that both women painted in different centuries, and therefore different styles were popular or widely used. The casualty, liveliness and spontaneity of Leyster would not have been expected to appear in Italian Renaissance art pieces. Anguissola was also part of higher society, which would entail that she would be expected to behave a certain way and consequently depict herself in a certain way. Leyster’s casual posture would not be expected to be found in the work of an aristocratic young woman. As mentioned in 4.1.2, Frans Hals already painted scenes in a similar setting as Leyster does in this case, which would make her positioning slightly less shocking for the public.

Another difference between both paintings is the brush technique that is used. Where Anguissola’s portrait shows hardly any brushstrokes and is painted very smoothly, Leyster works with broad brushstrokes and captures details in a completely different way. Both manners of painting are fitting to their style. The liveliness and casual feeling of Leyster’s painting are emphasised by her broad brushstrokes.

Though some other artists have proceeded Anguissola and Leyster in painting themselves in these kinds of settings, they were still both progressive painters, paving the way for others. In these two portraits, both paint themselves with confidence and display their artistry with pride.

4.2. En Profil Portrait

4.2.1 Sofonisba Anguissola: Portrait of a Young Woman in Profile



Fig. 8 Portrait of a Young Woman in Profile. Second half of 16th century. Sofonisba Anguissola. Displayed in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. Panel dimensions: 68,5x52,5 cm
(State Hermitage Museum, n.d.)

Analysis

A woman is depicted, painted en profile, and looking towards the right side of the painting. She is wearing an elaborately decorated dress and is holding a vase with three flowers in her hands. In this painting, different colours stand out. The background is dark, as a result of which the outline of the profile of the woman becomes clearly visible. Her pale complexion contrasts with the dark background. One of the other striking colours in the painting is the colour of the woman's red hair. Other notable colourful elements are the flowers in their vase. The dress that is painted merges in part with the background, because of its dark sublayer. However, the golden decoration that is placed upon this dark layer does stand out. The merging of the edges of the dress with the background is further strengthened by the shadows that are painted on the edges.

A spotlight is cast upon the woman from the front left corner, fully illuminating her profile, but also casting shadows upon her cape. Shadows are cast upon her dress, highlighting the pleads and folds. This use of shadow is less visible in the woman's hair, where there is less contrast between shaded and illuminated areas. Her face is also illuminated quite evenly, but some shade is drawn around the eyes and cheeks. The effect of the light is clearly visible on the left hand. The palm of the hand is bathed in light, whereas the top of the hand is shaded.

Anguissola applied several highlights in this portrait. Some of them are visible on the jewellery, as seen on the pearl necklace and hairpiece. These highlights are however mostly visible in the decorative elements of the dress. The use of highlights and shadows has been applied in such a way, that the appliques are portrayed realistically. They seem to be put upon the base layer and have depth. A detail of the painting showing the fabric is visible in figure 9.



Fig. 9 Detail of the painting ‘Portrait of a Young Woman in Profile’

Information about the painting

The portrait shows an unknown noblewoman. Anguissola pays much attention to the detailing of her clothing, realistically portraying different embroidery techniques. Most Spanish 16th-century Spanish costumes were made of one colour but stood out because of their elaborate embroidery consisting of different colours, gold and silver. The painted clothing portrays the fashion that was seen at court (Perlingieri, 1992, p. 160).

A remarkable element is the vase and flowers that the woman is holding, Anguissola is painting a still life in the painting, which was hardly done in the 16th century and became more popular in the following century (Perlingieri, 1992, p. 160). Anguissola also paints the flowers with botanical accuracy, which was not often seen in the case that flowers were introduced in other paintings in her time.

Anguissola subtly gives life to the woman she is portraying, for instance by giving her a slight blush and a soft gaze. She was however working in the confined environment of Spanish court, which favoured detailing of costumes, but did not usually prefer warmth and display of emotions. Anguissola did manage to find some leniency in this area, potentially because king Philip II of Spain, was positive about Italian art, also having the Italian painter Titian in employment (Pelingieri, 1992, p. 162).

A note has to be made that this painting was placed by Cole (2020, p. 236) in the category ‘works attributed to Sofonisba but accepted by few scholars’, therefore some controversy surrounds this painting. Though some facts about the painting remain remarkable, such as the depiction of a flower still life with botanical accuracy, even though the painting might not be painted by Anguissola herself.

4.2. En Profil Portrait

4.2.2 Judith Leyster: Young Boy in Profile



Fig. 10 Young Boy in Profile. ca 1630. Judith Leyster. Panel dimensions: 19 cm diameter
Displayed in The National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C, United States of America.
(National Gallery of Art, n.d.)

Analysis

The portrait shows a young child, looking towards the right side of the painting. The light is coming from the front left direction. Consequently, the shadow that is cast by the child's head on the background is visible in the bottom right corner of the painting. The colours of the background are quite similar to the tones of the child's face and hair. Especially the left side of the hair seems to merge with its surroundings, whereas the hair on top of the boy's head produces a larger contrast since the background is lighter on that side. The highlights in the child's hair are also of a similar colour to the backdrop. Even though the skin tone is similar in colour to its surroundings, the profile of the boy is still clearly distinguishable because of the shadow that is hitting the boy's face from the front left side. These shadows also provide depth and life to the profile, which is further accentuated by the bright coloured cheeks. This use of shadow is also clearly visible in the hair, giving it a wavy structure.

Leyster uses rough brushstrokes to paint the image, but despite these broad strokes conveys certain details, such as the structure of the collar and the thin golden line on the jacket of the child. The same goes for details on the face, such as the eyelashes. Leyster manages to convey a lot of details with very few brushstrokes. The portrait is 19 centimetres in diameter, which is a small size. Therefore the brushstrokes will seem relatively coarse and broad on this scale. Some parts of the portrait are painted more coarse than others, the brushstrokes are for instance visible in the boy's hair, but are much more smoothed out in the collar and jacket. A subtle gradience is visible in the collar as well, defining the illuminated and the shaded side.

Information about the painting

In this portrait, Leysters brings the boy's face to life with her broad painting strokes. She uses different techniques to convey this, for instance for the boy's hair, it is visible that she used a hard tool to scratch the hair strands into the paint (Wheelock, 2014). In most of Leyster's paintings, the expressions of the figures are quite lively, often they are smiling wide, as is the case in her painting 'Two Children with a Cat', which will be discussed shortly. Leyster is said to have worked in the studio of Frans Hals, by whom she was then probably inspired to paint these lively paintings in the style that she uses. Even though Hals also painted many small paintings of children, Wheelock (2014) states that this portrait most likely does not fit his style. Hals painted many of these small portraits as '*tronies*', paintings that serve as a practice to study the portrayal of character, they were not made for their likeness. Leyster's portrait shows the boy looking strictly to his left, bearing an air of quietness, he does not smile broadly.

It is more likely that Leyster has been inspired by the classicistic motive of a person depicted in profile, reflecting the status of the boy in the portrait. His hairstyle, the long lock of hair on the left side of his face called a lovelock, could also refer to a higher status which also applies to his clothing and ruff (Wheelock, 2014).

4.2.3. Comparison between 'Portrait of a Young Woman in Profile' and 'Young Boy in Profile'



Portrait of a Young Woman in Profile. Second half of 16th century. Sofonisba Anguissola. (State Hermitage Museum, n.d.)



Young Boy in Profile. ca 1630. Judith Leyster. (National Gallery of Art, n.d.)

Two portraits in profile, but two quite different ones. Both figures convey a similar expression, they are composed and contain a calmness. Anguissola was bound to the practices of court painting and its limitations to expressing emotions, whereas Leyster was free in this, but choose to give the boy a reserved expression.

Anguissola paid much attention to the clothing of the woman, painting the intricate embroidery on the dress. The clothing and jewellery befitting someone of high status. Leyster takes care to paint the boy's ruff with great attention since this painting is quite small. She also details the golden lining on the boy's clothing. Compared to her other paintings, this portrait conveys an air of importance, it is not just some boy.

Anguissola paints the background of her portrait dark, consequently, the attention of the viewer is drawn to the woman's face, her pale skin colour contrasting with the dark background. It is also quite similar to the base colour of her dress, therefore the golden detailing of the dress stands out. In Leyster's case, the boy's skin colour almost matches the background colour. The touch of red that she uses on his cheeks, therefore, gains more attention and brings life into the painting.

4.3. Portrait of Children and Animals

4.3.1 Sofonisba Anguissola: Three Children with a Dog



Fig. 11 Three children with a Dog. ca. 1570. Sofonisba Anguissola. Private collection. Panel dimensions: 95 x 74 cm (Arthive, n.d.)

Analysis

Three figures are visible in this portrait, two girls and one boy. The boy is holding a dog in his arms and the girl on the left is holding an object with a handle and fluffy top. The children are pictured in front of a green background. The background is painted as a rough surface, mixing the green hues with darker tones in certain patches. The colour palette is sober and the colours are attuned to each other. Even the colours of the dog's fur, assumed coincidentally, have similar tones to the girls' dresses and the children's hair colour.

The children's facial features are quite similar to each other. In the composition, a connection between them is created. The girl on the left is turned slightly towards the left of the painting, which makes her turn away from the other two figures. However, the boy in the middle is turned towards the left as well, creating a connection between them. His face is turned towards the opposite direction, the right side of the painting, therefore creating a connection with the girl on the right side of the painting. She in turn is turned towards the right side of the painting, in the opposite direction of the girl on the left side, therefore both flanking the boy in the middle. Her face is pointed towards the left side of the painting, creating a connection with the boy in the middle, despite her body being turned away from him. This connection is strengthened by her gaze being turned towards the left side of the painting as well. A triangle in the composition arises between the boy and the girl on the right. The two children on the left side of the painting draw the viewer in by looking directly at us.

The children are lit from the front left direction, their bodies casting shadows on the background. The light also casts shadows upon their own clothing, visible for instance on the girl on the right side of the painting. She is turned away slightly from the viewer, therefore her left arm is cast into shadow. Anguissola uses highlights, which are visible on the lining of the girl's dresses. She further pays attention to the details of the dress, making a distinction between the different materials, such as the delicate lace and the stronger, more rough, striped fabric of the dresses, as seen in figure 12.



Fig. 12 Detail of the painting 'Three Children with a dog'

Information about the painting

Cole (2020, p. 188) does not provide extensive specific information on the painting, but does mention it in the catalogue of the book under the section: Works with contested or insufficiently discussed attributions. Accompanying the painting, a list is given of the different attributions through the years. From this list, it becomes clear that many scholars have attributed the painting to Anguissola.

There is no specific data attached to the painting, nor is there any information to be found on the three children that are depicted. It has been suggested that it could have been Anguissola's brother Asdrubale and two of his sisters (Perlingieri, 1992, p. 101). An assumption can be made that these sisters would be Minerva and Europa, since the girls in the painting seem to be older than the boy. A side by side comparison of the children is given in figure 13.

Another note that was made, was the facial similarities of the boy in the centre and Massimiliano Stampa, whom Anguissola painted in the portrait 'Massimiliano Stampa, Marquess of Soncino' and was painted around 1557, which is depicted in figure 14. On the back of the painting an inscription was discovered, mentioning the painting was of Massimiliano Stampa, the third Marchese of Soncino, aged 9 in 1557 (Max. Sta. Mar. Son. III Aet. An. VIII 1557). This would place his date of birth at 1548, the painting could have been commissioned by Massimiliano's mother to commemorate his assumption of power (Perlingieri, 1992, p. 101). However, Massimiliano is indicated by Cole (2020, p. 40) as being 12 years old when he assumed power, therefore placing his birth year 1545. No specific date was placed on the painting with the three children, but some indication can be found pointing towards the period of 1570-1590. In the case that this would have been painted around 1590, Massimiliano would have been 44 or 46, therefore it is not likely that it is Massimiliano himself. However, Massimiliano and his wife Marianna de Leyva had multiple children, eight are mentioned by Francisco Pinel y Monroy in 1677. For many of the children there are no birth dates to be found, multiple joined the monastery and did not marry into significant families. The book mentions the sons first and then the daughter, this might have been in chronological order, or the sons were mentioned before the daughters since they would be first in line of succession.

In the painting three children are visible, the girls seem to be older than the boy in the centre, who seems to be standing up where the girls are sitting down. I would suggest that there is a possibility that these three children could have been three children of Massimiliano, the boy in the centre then being next in line and therefore Ermes II, the two girls being either Barbara, Caterina or Teresa. The resemblance of the boy with Massimiliano could be explained by him being his son. The painting could have been made around 1588 when their mother passed away and therefore references to mourning are applied to the painting. The boy in the centre is holding a dog, which could refer to a sign of mourning. Perlingieri (1992, p. 101) indicates the sleeping dog in the Massimiliano Stampa portrait as a sign of mourning, but also indicated that the dog was a part of the Stampa heraldic arms. The girls are however not dressed in black, but the girl on the left is holding a black object, of which the function is unknown. The green hue of the background in both paintings is also quite similar to each other, which could point to them having a relation to each other.



Fig. 13 A comparison of the three children in *Three Children with a Dog* and the three siblings of Anguissola. Details are used from the paintings *The Chess Game* (Women'n art, 2018) and *Portrait of Minderva, Amilcare and Asdrubale Anguissola* (Nivaagaards Malerisamling, n.d.).



Fig. 14 A comparison of the boy in *Three Children with a Dog* and Massimiliano Stampa in Anguissola's portrait *Massimiliano Stampa, Marquess of Soncino* (ArtSalonHolland, n.d.)

4.3. Portrait of Children and Animals

4.3.2 Judith Leyster: Two Children with a Cat



Fig. 15 Two Children with a Cat. 1629. Judith Leyster. Private Collection. Panel dimensions: 61 x 52 cm (Art Salon Holland, n.d.)

Analysis

This scene shows two children and a cat. They have been captured by Leyster in a dynamic composition, painting them while they are playing. The larger child, central in the picture, is casually holding a cat in his left arm and another object in his right hand, just visible on the bottom left corner of the painting. The second child is pictured, almost hiding behind the larger child, gazing at the cat.

Warm colours have been used in the painting. The background consists of a two-tone brown colourisation, this difference in tone is created by the shadow that is cast upon the wall. The clothing of the larger boy is colourful, his coat and trousers are painted orange and blue, combined with a red hat. The smaller boy's clothing is painted in a more modest colour palette, mostly consisting of grey tones. Because of this, the large boy not only takes centre stage because of his size but also because of his dominating colour palette. The cat's fur, consisting of black and white tones, contrasts with the colourful ensemble that the large boy is wearing.

The portrait is painted using a rough brushstroke. Despite this rough brushstroke, details and the children's expression in the painting are captured well. Their expressions portray happiness and playfulness. This liveliness is increased by the use of colour in their face, well visible in the little boy's rose coloured cheeks. Light is cast upon the two boys from the front left direction. The older boy's face is placed at the centre of this light and is fully lit up. The smaller boy's face is in part cast into shadow, since he is facing the right side of the painting, looking towards the cat. This shadow adds depth to his face. The shadow is also present underneath the arm of the older boy, this area is fully cast into the dark. Shadow is also used to visualise the pleading in the central boy's right arm.

Information about the painting

This painting shows the way in which Leyster conveys liveliness in her work. In this, she was presumably influenced by the similar portraits of Hals, in which he also portrays children with rich emotions. There are many similarities between their work, therefore this painting was only attributed to Leyster in the 20th century, despite it being signed with her monogram (Biesboer, 1993, p. 138). Hofrichter (1989, p. 45) mentions an engraving after the painting by Cornelis Danckerts, who inscribed it with *d. Hals pinxit*. She mentions how nowadays miss attributes are expected, but misattributions from contemporaries are less expected. The reason for this could be that the painting was made while Leyster worked in Hals's studio, which meant that it could have been sold as a workshop piece. Furthermore, Danckerts could have been unfamiliar with Leyster's monogram.

In her composition for this painting, Leyster uses a strong diagonal to create a triangular composition, the boy in the centre takes up the most space in the painting (Biesboer, 1993, p. 136).

Biesboer (1993, p. 139) suggests how the cat can refer to the mischief of the children, the boy on the left is keeping food away from the cat in his left hand and the cat itself away from the smaller boy. Cats are sometimes used as a symbolic reference to the sensibility of children. He also touches upon the clothing of the older boy and the type of food that he is holding in his hand. The clothes that he is wearing in the painting, are not worn in day to day life, they would be worn as a costume and sometimes by comical figures in paintings, to which the feather on his hat also refers. The costume and item of food, a '*boffer (or poffer)*' can be associated with the '*vastenavond*' (Shrove Tuesday), a religious event (Biesboer, 1993, p. 140).

4.3.3 Comparison between 'Three Children with a Dog' and 'Two Children with a Cat'



Three children with a Dog. ca. 1570. Sofonisba Anguissola.
(Arhive, n.d.)



Two Children with a Cat. 1629. Judith Leyster.
(Art Salon Holland, n.d.)

When comparing these two paintings to each other, many differences become visible. Naturally, Anguissola and Leyster both paint in a different style, which becomes clear in these two works. Where Leyster's painting shows movement, spontaneity and joy, Anguissola's painting is composed, and the placement of the children is thought through. One should take into account Anguissola's position as a court painter, much of her work featured members of prominent families, besides her own family members. Therefore certain demands would have been made by commissioners, the paintings were expected to look a certain way. Leyster is less bound to restrictions in this painting.

A clear contrast between the paintings is also visible in terms of colour usage. When putting the two works side by side, it becomes clear that Anguissola has used a sober colour pallet, whereas Leyster has chosen vivid, warm colours. The children's faces in Leyster's work are full of life, whereas the children's faces in Anguissola's work are paler, their expressions more preserved.

Though both works feature children and an animal, the meaning behind this animal in both paintings could be deeper than just a family pet. In the case of Anguissola, the dog could represent the family's heraldic sign or could represent mourning. In Leyster's work, the cat could represent the children's mischief. Leyster's whole portrait could be presumed to have a deeper, symbolic meaning, representing the foolish way people behave during 'vastenavond'.

4.4. Paintings of multiple figures and games

4.4.1 Sofonisba Anguissola: The Chess Game



Fig. 16 *The Chess Game*. 1555. Sofonisba Anguissola. Displayed in the national museum of Poznań. Panel dimensions: 72 cm × 97 cm

(Women'n art, 2018)

Analysis

In this painting, four figures are shown. Three of them are playing a game, in this case, chess. The chessboard is placed upon a table, which is covered by a tapestry. These three figures are dressed well, the fabric of their clothing is colourful and contains a lot of detail. Not only are their clothes similar in appearance, but their hairstyles are as well. This combined with their similar facial features would point toward a familiar relation. On the right side of the painting, an older woman is shown. This woman is dressed in plain clothes and could therefore be assumed to be the nanny of the three girls. The connection between the four figures is also visible by their line of sight. This is pictured in figure 17. The older woman is looking towards the youngest child, seated at the centre of the painting. She in turn is looking towards the slightly older girl on the right of the painting, who is looking towards the oldest girl pictured on the left of the painting. The oldest girl is looking toward the viewer, drawing them into the scene.

The painting shows the three girls playing chess in a natural setting. These natural surroundings are continued in the background, where a landscape is painted in the distance, for which Anguissola uses an atmospheric perspective. The painting itself can be divided into three segments. The figures are placed in the foreground, the two visible tree trunks and shrubbery form the second segment and the landscape in the distance is the third and final segment. These segments can be seen as layers placed upon each other, each having its own perspective.

Anguissola pays great attention to the details of the different materials, she uses highlights to portray the shimmering material of the dresses and also uses them to highlight the pearls that the girls are wearing. The figures are all lit from the front, this creates some cast shadows on for instance the face of the oldest girl on the left side of the painting. The trees and shrubbery behind them are however painted quite dark.

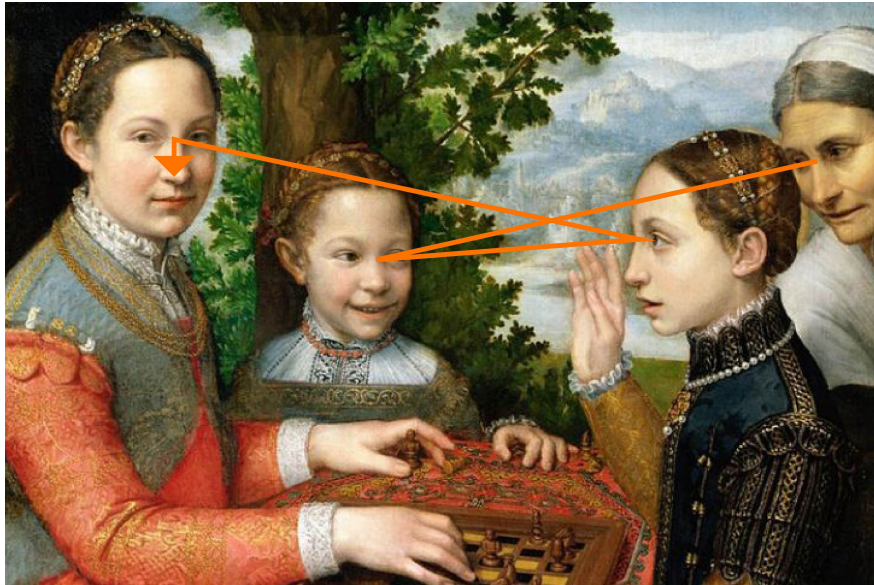


Fig. 17 Excerpt of the painting ‘*The Chess Game*’

Information about the painting

This painting is a family portrait, the three portrayed girls are indeed siblings, they are the sisters of Anguissola. The identity of the three girls has never been determined exclusively, the painting itself has been described by others in the past, but never in-depth. Anguissola’s signature is visible at the bottom of the painting, where she mentions that these are her three sisters and their servant painted in 1555. Perlingieri (1992, p. 86) deduces that these three girls are the sisters Lucia, Minerva and Europa, determining this based on the year the painting has been produced and the birth years of the sisters. Elena was already in the convent and Sofonisba’s other sister, Anna Maria, would have been too young. The woman in the background is their handmaiden. This handmaiden also appears in another portrait by Anguissola, called ‘Self-Portrait at the Spinnet with Attendant’, currently part of the Earl Spencer Collection in Althorp (Cole, 2020). Multiple details on the painting refer to them having a high status, for instance, the sisters are playing chess, a game for highly educated people at that time. Their clothing and the oriental carpet on the table also point toward their wealth. (Dijk, van, 2021, p. 76). Perlingieri (1992, p. 86) mentions Anguissola’s eye for detail concerning clothing, she was trained in the needle arts herself, likely using her experience in rendering a realistic representation of the fabric.

Presumably, Anguissola has placed certain elements, such as the bell tower of her hometown Cremona in the background scene (Perlingieri, 1992, p. 83). This tower still stands and is depicted in figure 18, accompanied by a detail of the painting, which could be presumed to be an abstract depiction of a clock tower. Anguissola paints the background in blue and silver greys, which were traditional to the Northern Italian painters and gives it a sfumato effect. (Perlingieri, 1992, p. 83).

The fact that the sisters are smiling and painted in a leisurely scene, enjoying themselves while playing chess is remarkable for portraiture in that period, since most portraits would have been more formal. This liveliness and informality were not seen before, these were everyday, intimate scenes (Perlingieri, 1992, p. 88).



Fig. 18 Detail of 'The Chess Game'. A potential depiction of La Torrazzo of Cremona and the currently still standing Torrazzo tower in Cremona (Mariona, 2014).

4.4. Paintings of multiple figures and games

4.4.2 Judith Leyster: A game of tric-trac



Fig. 19 A game of tric-trac. ca. 1631. Judith Leyster. Displayed at the Worcester Art Museum. Panel dimensions: 40.6 x 31.1 cm (Worcester Art Museum, n.d.)

Analysis

The painting shows three figures playing a game, their cheeks coloured from the intensity of the game or the drinks, of which the woman is still holding her cup. The figure on the left is looking toward the viewer. The other two figures are immersed in the game. The figure on the left is looking up with an amused expression, he might have just executed a very good move. He draws the viewer into the game. The setting is nighttime, the table is lit by a single oil lamp, creating an intimate atmosphere.

The background is painted dark, but with a tone of green applied to it, therefore the black hat of the man sitting on the left side of the painting is still distinguishable. The chair that he is sitting on is just visible against the dark background. Because a large part of the painting is painted in these tones, the different colours that are used in the clothing of the figures stand out. This is mostly visible in the left man's blue jacket and the woman's red sleeves. The white of her blouse also contrasts sharply with the dark setting. The middle man's clothing consists of sober tones, similar to the tones of the background. However, specifically, his hat stands out because of the lighter colour that has been given to it and lights up the centre of the painting.

The oil lamp on the table is the source of light in this painting, it casts a soft golden colour upon the faces and clothes of the participants of the game. This dramatic lighting is clearly visible in the face of the man in blue. Using *chiaroscuro*, a contrast between the illuminated and shaded sides of his face is created. Small highlights have been painted upon the faces and hands of the figures. These highlights are also visible on the sleeve of the man in blue, giving shape to the pleating of the sleeve in combination with the use of shadow.

The relatively rough brush strokes are clearly visible in the painting. Still, in certain parts of the painting, extra care has been given to some details. An example of this is the round disks which are part of the game, a shadow is cast upon them and a small narrow line defines their curve. Most attention concerning the details of clothing has been given to the man on the left side of the painting.

Information about the painting

As the title suggests, the three figures in the painting are playing a game of tric-trac, which was popular in 17th century Holland. The game was mostly played in inns and brothels (Biesboer, 1993, p. 174). One of the interesting aspects of the scene is that the game was mostly played by two men, however, in Leyster's painting, a woman is involved in the game. There is another man present around the table, seated in the middle, but the woman on the right seems to be the participator in the game. The fact that she is playing also eludes to the ambiguous meaning behind the painting. On the one hand, it shows the figures playing the game, enjoying their evening, but on the other hand, Leyster shows the double agenda that the man seating to the left has. Leyster subtly refers to his intentions by painting him with his right hand on a piece at the table and his left hand on his codpiece, revealing his intentions for the woman after the game is finished (Hofrichter, 1989, p. 177).

In the 17th century, many associations portrayed in paintings were clear to many. Cunning women, often courtesans, gambling and drinking were seen as corrupting to men (Biesboer, 1993, p. 174). As with this painting, some associations can be easily made. From the scene, the woman on the right could be a courtesan, though her clothing at first glance is more fitting to a domestic scene than that of a courtesan. However, she is handing the man on the left a pipe, which was associated with a sexual act. Her facial expressions portray innocence, but her actions do not, which can attribute to the sly characteristics of a courtesan states Biesboer (1993, p. 176). Leyster draws the spectator into the scene by turning the man on the left and having him connect his gaze to the viewer as if to consult what his next step should be. With this, she raises awareness for the morality of this choice (Biesboer, 1993, p. 177).

Regarding the composition of the painting, Biesbier (1993, p. 180) states that she could have been inspired by her future husband's, Jan Miense Molenaer, painting 'Cardplayers by lamplight'. The similarities between the two figures become clear in figures 20 and 21, where they are placed next to each other.



Fig. 20 Excerpt of 'A Game of Tric-Trac'.



Fig. 21 Excerpt of 'Cardplayers by lamplight'.
(RKD, n.d.)

4.4.3 Comparison between 'The Chess Game' and 'A Game of Tric-Trac'



The Chess Game. 1555. Sofonisba Anguissola. (Women'n art, 2018)



A Game of Tric-Trac. ca. 1631. Judith Leyster. (Worcester Art Museum, n.d.)

Though these paintings are relatively similar in their subject, figures playing a game, the meaning behind the two paintings are very different. Whereas Anguissola's painting is a loving family portrait of her sisters enjoying themselves in an innocent game, Leyster's painting is a depiction of vices and shows one visible game and one insinuated game that is being played.

A difference in style between the two painters is clearly visible and to be expected. Whereas Anguissola paints the fabrics of the girls' clothing with great care for detail, Leyster used a much more coarse brush technique. Despite this, she also manages to convey the different qualities of the fabrics.

Anguissola pays attention to the surroundings of her scene and paints an elaborate view of the scenery. This scenery however is built up out of layers and does not create a realistic environment for the location of the game. It adds to the esthetical quality of the painting, but at the same time also enhances this portrayal of a scene that is mostly focused on portraying a positive, esthetical image, almost fairytale-like. Leyster's painting however is in many aspects a counterpart to this painting. Attention is hardly paid to the surroundings of the three figures, the focus is placed upon them. She enhances this focus by the use of a sole light source, giving the scene an ominous and mysterious appearance. The darkness of this painting contrasts with the bright colourful world of Anguissola's painting and consequently can be seen as representatives of the innocent youthful world on the one hand (The Chess Game) and the adult world which is filled with temptation (A Game of Tric-Trac).

4.5. Portrait of a woman

4.5.1 Sofonisba Anguissola: Portrait of Queen Anne of Austria



Fig. 22 Portrait of Queen Anne of Austria. ca.1573. Sofonisba Anguissola. Displayed at the Museo Nacional del Prado.
Panel dimensions: 86 x 67,5 cm
(Museo Del Prado, n.d.)

Analysis

A woman is visible in this portrait. She is portrayed from the waist up, her hands are just visible, as is the edge of a seat at the right bottom side of the painting. A relatively sober colour palette is used, the background is painted in a dark green hue, the shadow of the woman casts over it. Her dress is dark in colour as well and almost merges with the background. The dark shade is contrasted by her white scarf and the lacework that is present at her collar and at the end of her sleeves. The only bright colours in the painting can be found in the red tint of the chair and the golden ring around her gloves. Because of the use of dark and sober colours in this painting, the attention of the viewer is immediately drawn to the face of the woman. Her pale complexion stands out against the dark hues of the background. Her cheeks and lips have subtly been given colour, bringing life to her face. She is not looking directly toward the viewer, but towards her right. This combined with her expression conveys an air of sophistication.

The work itself is quite detailed, which can for instance be seen in the lacework at the end of the sleeves and the collar. This lacework is depicted in the excerpt of the painting in figure 23. These details also extend to the structure of the dress. Even though the colour of the dress is dark, Anguissola is still able to portray the difference between materials. For instance, a clear transition is visible halfway down her arms, where the fabric of the dress becomes more articulate and rich. The sleeves are slightly highlighted, resulting in a shimmering fabric. The use of these highlights is for instance also visible in the decoration of the chair. The metal pins are highlighted and small highlights are also used in the golden treading of the chair. These highlights also return in the beaded necklace that is placed around her neck, which she is holding in her right hand. Finally, Anguissola also uses the light falling onto the woman's face by placing highlights on her hair, further adding to the realistic appearance of the woman.

Noticeable in the portrait are the proportions of the woman. Her head is painted relatively large in comparison to her torso. This difference in the ratio is also visible in the hands. Especially the hand in the middle of the portrait, her right hand, is painted fairly small in comparison to the size of her arm and torso. The proportion of her left hand is more relatable to the size of her torso.



Fig. 23 Detail of the painting *'Portrait of Queen Anne of Austria'*

Information about the painting

This portrait was painted by Anguissola around 1573, it is accompanied by another painting by Anguissola, that of Philip II, as shown in figure 24. This portrait was made around 1565 but was altered in 1573, presumably to suit the portrait of Anne. Some debate has been present discussing whether the paintings were made by Anguissola. Perlingieri (1992, p. 132) describes how she dismisses the hand of Anguissola in the paintings due to the facial colouring and the round shape of the hands and contributes the works to Alonso Sánchez Coello. Cole (2020, p. 129) recognises her remarks but states multiple factors that do make Anguissola the most likely artist. He mentions for instance the subtle lighting effects and the shadow that is cast on the back wall, which points towards an Italian artist rather than a Spanish one. No documents have been found to attribute the paintings to either artist, but Cole presents an extensive list of specialists attributing both paintings to Anguissola.



Fig. 24 Philip II. 1565 (Altered in 1573). Sofonisba Anguissola. Displayed at the Museo Nacional del Prado.
Panel dimensions: 88 x 72 cm
(Museo Del Prado, n.d.)

4.5. Portrait of a woman

4.5.2: Judith Leyster: Potrait of an Unknown Woman



Fig. 25 Portrait of an Unknown Woman. 1635. Judith Leyster. Displayed at the Frans Hals Museum.
Panel dimensions: 53,5 x 41,5 cm
(Vereniging Rembrandt, n.d.)

Analysis

One figure is placed centrally in this portrait. Leyster has painted the woman seated in a chair, her left hand resting on the arm of the chair and her right hand holding a book. The colour palette of this painting is sober. The background is a neutral green/ brown tint, slightly lighter than the dark colour of the woman's dress. By creating this difference in tint, the outline of the dress is still clearly recognisable against the background. The attention is immediately drawn to the woman's face, which is framed by the white collar. The bright, white colour of this collar forms a contrast with the skin colour of the subject of the painting. The consequence of this contrast is the added liveliness in the face. This is further enforced by the pink hue that Leyster has added to the cheeks, lips and nose.

Leyster places a spotlight on the woman's face, originating from the left side of the painting. This results in numerous shadows, visible for instance in the large cast shadow on the collar, originating from the bonnet. Shadows are also visible in small amounts, around the nose and against the left cheek of the woman, cast by the edge of the bonnet. This use of shadow is pictured in a detail of the painting in figure 26. Here Leyster paints the woman's left hand gripping the edge of her seat, therefore it is painted in a contracted position. This positioning of the hand casts a shadow on the back of the hand, creating a realistic depiction of the hand. The lacework behind the hand, on the cuff of the sleeve, is highlighted. These highlights are visible throughout the painting, for instance as a very thin line on the edge of the seat, showing the curve of the armrest. It is also visible on top of the bonnet and as small highlights in the woman's eyes, bringing them to life. Highlights are used moderately on the sleeves, showing the difference in material between the bodice and the sleeves. This gentle use of light is further demonstrated in the front seam of the dress and the pleading of the dress where the bodice meets the skirt.

Leyster paints this portrait with a moderately visible brushstroke, which is mostly visible in the hands and face. Despite this relatively rough painting style, the brushstrokes convey a realistic image. In different parts of the painting, there is a lot of attention to detail. This can be seen in the collar, lacework and pattern on the sleeves of the dress. It realistically conveys the characteristics of the elements, such as the lightness of the collar and the fragility of the lacework.



Fig. 26 Detail of the painting '*Portrait of an Unknown Woman*'

Information about the painting

This portrait is one of the few that is indisputable attributed to Leyster, the painting is signed with her monogram in the right bottom corner visible in figure 27. It was only in at the end of the 19th century, that the work was attributed to Leyster (Hofrichter, 1989, p. 61). Before this, the painting was attributed to Frans Hals, at the time the main portraitist in Haarlem (Biesboer, 1993, p. 204).

The woman in the portrait is turned towards her right, the viewers left, which was customary for pendants. This custom was already seen in the Middle Ages and was followed in the 17th century as well, the husband is portrayed, from the point of view of the spectator, on the right side, the woman on the left side (Biesboer, 1993, p. 204). In this case, there are no clear indications that the woman was married, she does not wear gloves or a ring, which would point to a married state. There are however also paintings where married women were portrayed in a similar way, therefore there is no definite statement to be made on the subject. Moreover, the fact that the woman is placed facing the left side of the painting was also used in individual portraits, there did not have to be an accompanying painting (Biesboer, 1993, p. 204).

The woman in Leyster's painting is placed relatively high on the canvas, which is something that is also visible in Hals' portraits. Both use a triangular setup for their composition, by having the right hand holding a book and the left hand resting on the chair, which gives stability to the portrait (Biesboer, 1993, p. 204; Hofrichter 1989, p. 61). This stability and stiffness is reduced by the soft expression on the woman's face, which also establishes a feeling of directness towards the viewer. This is enhanced by the use of a trompe- l'oeil effect, composed of the woman's left arm resting on the armchair, but seems to be lying on the frame of the painting. This was something that Hals and other painters often used (Biesboer, 1993, p. 206).

The book that the woman is holding, is presumed to be a religious book, based on its appearance, probably the new testament. Her demure clothing could also add to this statement of religiousness since her clothing would comply with the wishes of the church (Biesboer, 1993, p. 207).

Hofrichter (1989, p. 61) and Biesboer (1993, p. 208) both note the fact that the work was relatively small at the time, therefore the work was probably a modest commission. Hofrichter further reinforces this notion by the fact that the preparation of the panel was thin, which would also suggest a less intricate work.

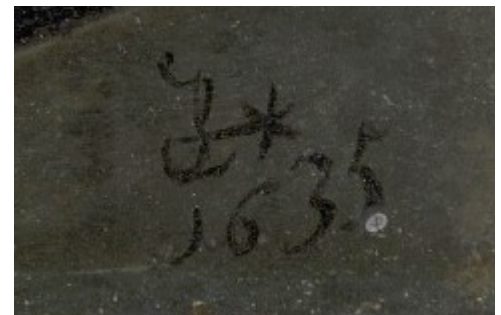


Fig. 27 Brightened detail of Portrait of an Unknown Woman showing Leyster's monogram.

4.5.3 Comparison between 'Portrait of Queen Anne of Austria' and 'Portrait of an Unknown Woman'



Portrait of Queen Anne of Austria. ca.1573. Sofonisba Anguissola. (Museo Del Prado, n.d.)



Portrait of an Unknown Woman. 1635. Judith Leyster. (Vereniging Rembrandt, n.d.)

In the previous comparisons, the difference between the works of Anguissola and Leyster was often quite clear. In this case, the works of both artists are more similar in appearance. Especially for Leyster, this work is quite modest. Where we often see broad brushstrokes and clear emotions, this work is more reserved. The subject of her work is no musician or child, she is a woman whom Leyster portrays as modest.

The way that the woman in Leyster's portrait is placed compares to Anguissola's placement of queen Anne. The expressions are similar as well, they are composed, but a small smile is visible on their faces. Notable is the fact that the woman in Leyster's painting is facing towards the left of the painting, her right, whereas Anguissola places the queen facing the right of the painting, her left. This custom could have been different in certain parts of Europe, since Anne was queen of Spain and the portrait was made in this environment.

A difference between the two figures is the anatomy of the body and the liveliness that is portrayed. Anne's hands seem quite small in comparison to her body and are quite round in appearance. Anguissola has added slight colour to the queen's cheeks, but her overall complexion is quite pale, which might be expected of a royal at that time. The woman in Leyster's painting has a more tanned complexion and Leyster has added notable red blushes and red tints to her nose.

5. Conclusion

The comparison between Anguissola and Leyster shows us that the painters are different from each other, but also have many similarities. They came from different backgrounds; Anguissola was born into a family with connections to nobility and Leyster came from a modest working family. Anguissola spend her life mostly at court, in relative luxury, whereas Leyster was confronted with financial trouble. It is interesting to note that, despite their differences in background, they both managed to garner admiration for their work and reach the top in their field. Though one could ask if Leyster would have been able to develop her skills as much if she would have lived in Anguissola's time, coming from the circumstances that she was coming from in her time.

Both painters operated in different fields. In the Dutch 17th century, the clientele had switched from the church and nobility towards the middle class, made up of civilians that had come into money during the economic prosperity of the Republic. This meant that the type of paintings that were in demand, were much more diverse. Anguissola, as a court painter, would have been more restricted in the sense that she was dependent on the nobility clientele, most often asking for reserved portraits. In this case, it would have been interesting to see what type of works Anguissola would have created, would she have lived in the relative freedom of the Dutch 17th century.

Though Anguissola and Leyster painted in different styles, they were both forerunners in their art, which is for instance shown in their self-portraits, where they both choose compositions that are relatively unused. They painted with confidence and displayed their pride in their profession, as is clearly visible in the self-portraits. Both also painted remarkably broad subjects. Whereas some female painters, such as Rachel Ruysch and Maria van Oosterwijck, painted mostly still lifes, often containing flowers, Anguissola and Leyster painted many more different genres. They not only painted traditional portraits but also paintings portraying subjects in a casual, familiar setting and genre scenes. As women, this was quite exceptional, since women did not generally paint these subjects and especially not in such an extensive manner. Anguissola was a court painter and painted portraits of nobility, though this was not the case at the beginning of her career. The portraits that Anguissola painted of her family, such as *The Chess Game*, had a familiar, slightly casual setting, which was innovative and surprising for the time. The liveliness and informality with which Anguissola painted were not seen before, these were everyday, intimate scenes. This liveliness in paintings was also something that Leyster was praised for. Leyster painted genre scenes, depicting scenes of everyday life, though the subjects of Leyster's paintings were more provocative than Anguissola's, befitting the period of the 17th century. Anguissola would have been more bound to commissions of nobility and the expectations that were attached to them. Leyster however also painted more reserved portraits, such as the *Portrait of an unknown woman* in which we can see many similarities with Anguissola's work.

By not only discussing Anguissola's and Leyster's own work but comparing them to each other, it shows us how one could have influenced the other and gives insight into the extent of their work. It leaves room for more similar comparisons with other well-known painters, such as Katharina van Hemessen (1527-1567) or Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1656), with other male contemporaries or their former teachers Bernardino Campi (1522-1591), Bernardino Gatti (1495-1576) and Frans Hals (1582-1666) to explore to what extent they influenced each other. Such a comparison can be made for many other painters in many different periods as well. This specific comparison has shown us that Anguissola and Leyster were two women who could measure themselves with contemporary male artists, which was corroborated by their contemporaries, praising them for their skills. They both excelled in a profession in which they were not necessarily expected to excel. They were not afraid to do things differently, were forerunners of their times and inspired many others in the time to come.

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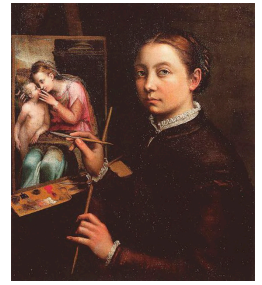
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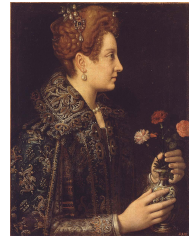
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