



**American Federation of Arts**

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**FIRST EXHIBITION OF THE WORK OF DUTCH MASTER GERARD TER BORCH EVER SHOWN IN NORTH AMERICA OPENS AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART**

**ORGANIZED BY THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS, NEW YORK, AND THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON**

New York, NY (July 30, 2004)—Acclaimed for his elegant and refined interior genre scenes, the Dutch master Gerard ter Borch (1617–1681) is one of the most important and beloved artists of the seventeenth century. His artistic genius was recognized in his lifetime as it is today, and his paintings are coveted by museums and collectors around the world. Organized by the American Federation of Arts (AFA), New York, and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, *Gerard ter Borch* is the first exhibition of the artist's work ever shown in the U.S. It will open on November 7, 2004, at the National Gallery of Art, where it will be on view until January 30, 2005, before traveling to the Detroit Institute of Arts (February 27–May 22, 2005). A small selection of paintings from the exhibition will be shown at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, from June 9 to September 4, 2005.

*Gerard ter Borch* was organized by the American Federation of Arts, New York, and the National Gallery of Art, Washington. This exhibition was supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

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Not since the 1974 exhibition of Ter Borch's work at the Mauritshuis, The Hague, and the Landesmuseum, Münster, has there been an exhibition focused on Ter Borch. Selected by Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., curator of the exhibition and Curator of Northern Baroque Paintings at the National Gallery of Art, this exhibition of approximately fifty paintings from public and private collections in the United States and Europe brings together the best works from each area of the artist's career, highlighting the most striking early pictures of the 1630s, the mid-career genre paintings for which the artist is best known, and the small portraits that brought him prosperity throughout his professional life.

"Gerard ter Borch was one of the most accomplished painters of seventeenth-century Holland, enjoying a considerable reputation in his own day. We are delighted to be collaborating with the National Gallery to present this remarkable exhibition and to bring Ter Borch for the first time ever to North America," said Julia Brown, Director of the AFA.

Ter Borch was born into a wealthy family of artists, among whom he would become the most accomplished and successful. He showed an early aptitude for drawing, studying first with his father, who was a draftsman, and later with the painter Pieter Molijn, with whom he collaborated on a few landscapes in the 1640s. Inhabiting a genteel and privileged world, Ter Borch painted what he knew; no Dutch artist captured as well as he did the elegance and grace of wealthy burghers. His mastery at rendering the varied textures of luxurious fabrics—the sheen of a satin skirt, the delicacy of a lace cuff, the cool gloss of a shined leather boot—is unsurpassed, and the figures that populate his paintings are not types but rather reflections of his family, friends, and colleagues.

Ter Borch is best known today for his genre scenes, which follow common themes and compositions of his time—letter writing, discreet encounters between men and women, and family interactions, among other subjects—but he is unique among his contemporaries for his psychological insight into the encounters he depicted, capturing with exceptional sensitivity the complex inner life of his subjects through tiny gestures, furtive glances, and carefully observed expressions. Highlights among the genre paintings in the exhibition include *The Suitor's Visit* (National Gallery of Art, Washington) and *A Lady at Her Toilet* (The Detroit Institute of Arts), as well as *Gallant Conversation* (better known as the *Paternal Admonition*, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), which is perhaps Ter Borch's most famous painting.

Though his high-life scenes are more familiar, Ter Borch also showed extraordinary skill in painting more humble subjects, and the exhibition includes several examples of such work, including the unusual *The Grinder's Family* (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie) and two similar paintings from the J. Paul Getty Museum, *A Maid Milking a Cow in a Barn* and *A Horse Stable*.

By the 1640s, Ter Borch had established his reputation as a portraitist and was commissioned to portray many wealthy burghers in Amsterdam, the town of Deventer where he lived for much of his life, and Zwolle; and in 1648 he was the artist selected to accompany the Dutch delegates to Münster to record the signing of the treaty that would end the Eighty Years' War between Spain and the Dutch Republic. In Münster he also painted individual portraits of a number of the delegates from the Netherlands, as well as of foreign dignitaries. These small, typically half-length portraits and the iconic group portrait *The Swearing of the Oath of Ratification of the Treaty of Münster, 15 May 1648* (National Gallery, London) are complemented in the exhibition by several full-length (but still small-scale—a format unique among Ter Borch's contemporaries) portraits of adults and children, notably the sumptuous *Portrait of a Young Woman* (The Cleveland Museum of Art) and the endearing *Helena van der Schalcke* (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). Distinctive for their psychological intensity, these unusual full-length portraits in particular served not only as visual records of individuals but as markers of personal and social identity. In these paintings, reserved yet confident postures and solemn, noble expressions replaced the more usual devices of opulent settings and flamboyant dress to reflect the dignity and affluence of the sitters.

*Gerard ter Borch* is accompanied by the first major English-language publication on the artist, thus making a significant contribution to the study of seventeenth-century Dutch painting. Published in English by the AFA and the National Gallery of Art in association with Yale University Press, and in Dutch by the AFA and the National Gallery of Art in association with Waanders Publishers, the 240-page exhibition catalogue includes full color reproductions and entries for each of the paintings in the exhibition written by Arthur Wheelock, curator of the exhibition; Alison McNeil Kettering, William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of Art History at Carleton College; and Marjorie E. Wieseman, Curator of European Painting and Sculpture at the Cincinnati Art Museum. It also includes essays by Wheelock on the artistic development of Ter Borch and by Kettering on the artist's modern style, as well as a study of Ter Borch's technique for painting satin by Arie Wallert, curator at the Rijksmuseum.

*The AFA initiates and organizes art exhibitions that are presented in museums around the world. The AFA also publishes exhibition catalogues and offers educational and professional development programs for the museum community and general public. For more information, look at our Web site at [www.afaweb.org](http://www.afaweb.org).*

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