



CHRISTIAEN COEVERSHOFF

(Groningen 1595– The Hague 1659)

“Elegant Portrait of a Young Boy with Amulet”

oil on panel

97.7 x 74.7cm

Signed Work and Dated Work with Inscription

“Aetatis sua jen fen ha anno 1633”

For the month of November, the Soraya Cartategui Gallery is pleased to present you this very special and delicate portrait by the enigmatic Dutch painter Christiaen Coevershoff. The artist was born in Groningen in 1595 and died in The Hague at the age of sixty-four. Coevershoff specialized in portraiture and Christian religious representations and was most active in the cities of Amsterdam, Enkhuizen, and The Hague.

Documentation of the time show that Christiaen Coevershoff was married to Janneke Seghers in Amsterdam in 1617. After having children in 1619 and 1621, the family disappeared from Amsterdam. A notarial act of 1639 shows that Coevershoff was then living in the city of Enkhuizen, where he produced some signed portraits. Further documentation indicates that Coevershoff was remarried in The Hague, but under the alias of Cornelis Jansz van Groningen and without indication of his previous marriage. It is likely that he took an assumed name to avoid paying the maternal portion to his daughter. Furthermore, despite his rather tenuous financial condition, Coevershof appropriated the title of Joncheer (a Dutch honorific of nobility) and changed his age. He second wife was Catharina Hellemans, daughter of the goldsmith and jeweler Cornelis Hellemans. In 1656, Couvershoff was one of the founding members of the Confrerie Pictura in The Hague. He died between January 28 and August 26 in 1659 at approximately 63 years old.

Christiaan Coevershoff specialized in portraiture and many of his portraits were commissioned. He was a worldly man who travelled to other countries and therefore was widely renowned and acclaimed. In Holland during the XVII century, there was a big change in the social hierarchy. Due to an increase in commerce and economic prosperity, the nobles, aristocrats, and clergy were joined by a new social class. This bourgeois had purchasing power and shared some of the tastes of the other upper classes. Portraiture boomed as the bourgeois desired to have their portraits painted and consequently numerous artists geared their production to this demand. The detail of the works varied by price and could feature a bust, a bust and hands, or a full portrait such as the one of *Elegant Portrait of a Young Boy with Amulet*.

The *Elegant Portrait of a Young Boy with Amulet* shows the precision and attention to detail the artist has in order to capture the expression in the sitter's face as well as the fashion of the time. The work is most likely a commissioned portrait from a wealthy family, which is evidenced by the type of high-quality garments and expensive accessories the young boy is wearing. It showcases a chubby infant against a moss colored curtain and dark green wall backdrop and a checkered marble floor.



The little boy has a very sweet facial expression and his chubby and red cheeks confirm his healthy appearance, which references his wealth and social class.

The hat is made out of white lace, dark green velvet, white feathers, small jewels, and a red bow. The red bow adds an accent of color that matched the boy's red lips and cheeks. Coevershoff paints each element delicately by using small and thin brushstrokes.

During this period, it was very common for boys to dress with these garments that seem more appropriate for girls. These dressings would emphasize the family's class.



The sophisticated blue and white outfit is stylishly adorned with a cape. The amount of detail in the fabric and the meticulously painted cuffs and collar require a lot of skill. The light blue fabric has a very delicate white flower motif that balances beautifully with the white lace in the collar and cuffs. The artist paints these details in a graceful manner, which allows the viewer to see through the thin material.





A very interesting element of this work is the “pentimento”, or trace of an erroneous brushstroke or illustration by the artist that he regretted, but is still visible as a shadow or trace. By looking very closely, the viewer can see towards the right of the infant a “pentimento” because the dress was initially going to be wider.

The viewer is also able to see that the boy has a golden chain draped around his upper body and he is holding a type of amulet. Placing an amulet on a child was very common practice at that time in order to protect them against early death, sickness, and bad fortune. In XVII, child mortality was very high and it was common to give children these types of objects to protect them from illness or other auspices.





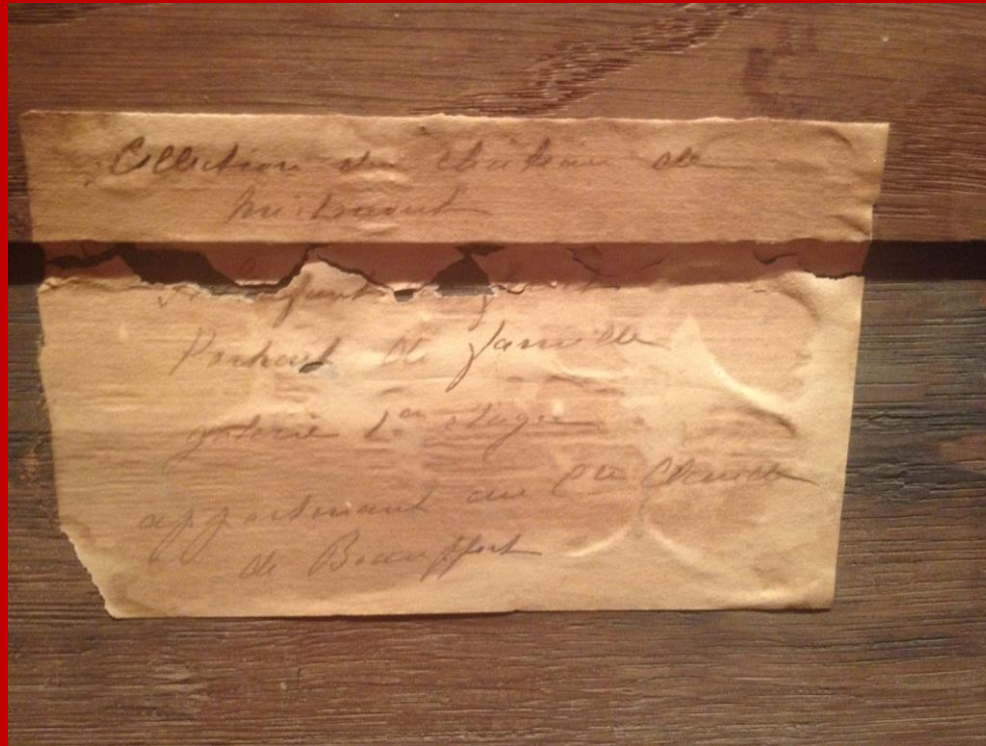
The infant is also holding a whip that might have been used as a toy. The handle is bright red and this element might have served as more than a toy, reminding the viewer that the sitter comes from a wealthy family.



The red velvet slippers have a large bow and are decorated with a silver trim. The shoes are very sophisticated and show the taste and style of the upper class of that time.



The painting is signed on the lower left and there is an inscription that reads AETATIS SUA JEN FEN HA ANNO 1633. This means that the work was finished in 1633.



On the back of the work, there is an old label that reveals the portrait's provenance. It belonged to the collection of the Castle of the Count of Beaufort in Fenham, United Kingdom. Furthermore, the sticker reads that this work was hung on the first floor of the castle and was a family gift.

We are very grateful to Dr. Rudi E.O. Ekkart and Sabine Craft of the Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD), The Hague for confirming *Elegant Portrait of a Young Boy with Amulet* as a work by Christiaan Coevershoff.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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PROVENANCE

Conde de Beaufort, England.

MUSEUMS

Christiaan Coevershoff's works can be found in many museums around the world including: Philadelphia (Philadelphia Museum of Art), Utrecht (Centraal Museum), Budapest (Museum of Fine Arts), Wiesbaden (Städtisches Museum), Málaga (Collection Duque de Alveiro).