

[View this email in your browser](#)



Galería de Arte

# Soraya Cartategui

Dear friends,

This October the gallery presents this wonderful work by the important Dutch painter, Christiaan van Couwenbergh.

Best wishes,  
Soraya Cartategui



[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

*“The finding of Moses”*

Oil on panel

118 x 123,5 cm. (46,46 x 48,62 in.)

1655 ca.

Signed with anagram C.B.F.

Christiaan van Couwenbergh was an important painter of the Dutch Golden Age. He was born in Delft in 1604, son of Gillis van Couwenbergh known silversmith, engraver and art dealer of the city of Mechelen, who moved to Delft before 1604 where he married Adriana Woutersdr Vosmaer sister of the famous flower painter Jacob Vosmaer (1574-1641).

In 1622 Christiaan moved to Utrecht, where he would remain for a short period of time. During that time he stayed close to the circle of the great Dutch caravaggist masters, Dirck van Baburen (1595 - Utrecht 1624) and Gerrit van Honthorst (Utrecht 1592 - 1656), very prominent painters who traveled to Italy where they met numerous techniques. Upon their return, they created the Utrecht School, heavily influenced by Caravaggio (1571-1610). Couwenbergh spent two years in the city of Utrecht, where he was mainly interested in the caravaggist techniques that characterized these two great painters.

In 1627, the documentation relocates him to the city of Delft, year in which he entered the *Guilde of St. Luke*, at that time he made a trip to Italy where he learned the technique of the great masters, such as Caravaggio that will later influence to his works, especially in fleshyness and in the choice of the topics discussed, which in general, had to do with biblical and historical scenes. Returning from his trip to Italy, he settled in The Hague in 1647, where he joined the *Confreire Pictura*, a club of artists who were not satisfied with the precepts of the *Guild of St. Luke* in the city of The Hague. In 1649 he was a deacon in a church in the same city.

He specialized in great historical and religious allegories, which he normally represented in large formats, for the decoration of the mansions of the nobility of the time. Often his works represented life-sized nudes.

His artistic career was not limited to paintings, but he also made drawings, prints and interesting tapestries. Among his clientele, Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange, who acquired numerous works for the decoration of *Huis ter Nieuwburg*, the prince's palace in the city of Rijswijk (Holland), stands out. There were numerous requested commissions for his works, since in his time he achieved great relevance and fame among the high nobility.

Later, between 1654-1656 he moved to Cologne, where he finally died.



Our work represents the finding of Moses recounted in the Book of Exodus. The birth of Moses took place when an indeterminate Egyptian pharaoh ordered the midwives to kill every born Hebrew man, but these out of fear of God, ignored that request.

According to the text, Moses was the son of Amram, a member of the Levi tribe and a descendant of Jacob, and his wife, Jochabed who, by giving birth to Moses, kept him hidden for three months. When he couldn't hide it anymore, he placed it in a basket and took it to the Nile, where the little boy descended downstream.

The Egyptian princess Termutis, discovered the basket with Moses inside. Moses' older sister, Miriam, who had closely followed the boy's whereabouts, advised the princess to commission a Hebrew to breastfeed and take care of the child. The Hebrew that Princess Termutis chose was casually Jocabed, the mother of Moses.

---

The author uses a triangular composition, where he represents the main scene of the work. On a landscape background that shows the banks of the Nile River. It is exceptional the way to make the transparency of the water by the author, where we can see how the characters that appear in the painting are in the water and still allows us to observe all the splendorousness of the fleshyness of women's bodies. In addition, we see how the whole scene is beautifully reflected in the water of the river.

[Subscribe](#)
[Past Issues](#)
[Translate ▼](#)


wearing a delicate crown, perches on a vaporous white and bluish cloths, which manifest the author's mastery when painting the transparency of the clothes. The Egyptian princess draws her arms towards little Moses as a sign of protection and shows us a calm and peaceful appearance.

Little Moses finds himself crying inconsolably and directing one of his arms to Princess Termutis. Inside a small wicker basket in which he has traveled downstream to the encounter with the princess and her entourage. We see how emotions are represented exceptionally on the face of the child, who directs his gaze to the princess in search of his attention.



Surrounding Moses, several servants of the princess's entourage appear, as they carry jugs and are also naked just like Termutis. They are inside the Nile River, from which they follow the scene that is unfolding before them with great attention, holding the child's little cradle with great tenderness.

On the cusp of the composition we can see Miriam, the sister of Moses, who is explaining the child's discovery to Princess Termutis. He points with his right arm towards the Nile River, from which the child has descended into the wicker basket. On his face we can see the concern that the princess finally agrees to take care of the baby and thus do not have to meet the fateful end that awaited him.



Under Miriam, we observe an old woman of humble clothing that we can suspect would be the true mother of Moses,

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

little one, holding the sheet that hid it so that the princess can observe the baby.

His face reflects joy while hope and his eyes let us glimpse the love he feels for little Moses.

If we look at the representation of the characters, we capture the importance that the painter gave him to shape the naked and large body, in addition the fleshy reminds us clearly of Caravaggio who influenced him mainly in the works of historical and religious subjects, as our case.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Wolfgang, C. Maier-Preusker. *Christiaen van Couwenbergh (1604-1667): Oeuvre und Wandlungen eines holländischen Caravaggisten..* 1991, pag.194, fig. 35, note A5. **Reproduced.**
- Wolfgang, C. Maier-Preusker. *Christiaen van Couwenbergh (1604-1667): Oeuvre und Wandlungen eines holländischen Caravaggisten. Catálogo razonado.* 1991, pag.194, fig. 35, nota A5. Reproducido.
- Arnold Houbraken. *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, 1718.
- Bredius, 'Het schildersregister van Jan Sysmus, Stads Doctor van Amsterdam. II', *Oud-Holland* 8 (1890), p. 217-234, esp. 223-226
- H. Wichmann, 'Mitteilungen über Delfter Künstler des XVII. Jahrhunderts', *Oud-Holland* 42 (1925), p. 60-71, esp. p. 63-65
- B.N. Nicolson, 'Caravaggio and the Netherlands', *The Burlington Magazine* 94 (1952), p. 247-252
- Brière-Misme, 'L'énigme du maître C.B.', *La Revue des arts* 4 (1954), p. 143-152
- J. de Coo, 'Christiaen van Couwenberghs endgültiger Einzug in die kölnen Kunstgeschichte', *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch: Westdeutsches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 27 (1965), p. 409-418
- W.C. Maier-Preusker, 'Christiaen van Couwenbergh (1604-1667). Oeuvre und Wandlungen eines holländischen Caravaggisten', *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch: Westdeutsches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 52 (1991), p. 163-236
- N. Dufais, 'Christiaen van Couwenbergh' (biographical part], in: A. Blankert et al, *Hollands Classicisme in de zeventiende-eeuwse schilderkunst*, (exh.cat.Rotterdam/Frankfurt a/M), Rotterdam 1999, p. 156-158
- W.W. Robinson, 'The Abrams Album: An Album Amicorum of Dutch Drawings from the Seventeenth Century', *Master Drawings* 53 (2015), p. 3-58
- Wright, C. *Dutch Painting in the Seventeenth Century. Images of a Golden Age in British Collections.* Lund Humphries, 1989, p. 179.
- Bernt, Walter. *The Netherlandish Painters of the Seventeenth Century*, Phaidon, 1970. Vol. I, pag. 27.
- Liedtke, Walter A. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art New York, Vermeer and The Delft School*, Catálogo, 2001.

#### PROVENANCE

- Private Collection, Italy.

#### MUSEUMS

There are works by Christiaen van Couwenbergh in the collections of museums in several cities, among others: Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf, Germany - Kunsthaus, Zürich, Switzerland - Gemäldeammlung der Universität, Göttingen, Germany - Musée des Beaux-Arts, Strasbourg, France - Galerie d'Arenberg, Brussels, Belgium - Dordrechts Museum, Dordrecht, The Netherlands.

[Subscribe](#)

[Past Issues](#)

[Translate](#) ▼

---