

[View this email in your browser](#)



# Soraya Cartategui

Dutch and Flemish XVI and XVII century art

Dear Friends,

In order to begin the new gallery season we have chosen this interesting work by Werner van der Valckert (1580/85–1627), a prominent Dutch artist who specialized mainly in group portraits but also painted individual portraits as well. This beautiful work is available, please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to receive more information.

Best wishes,  
Soraya Cartategui



### **Werner van der Valckert**

(The Hague 1580/85 – Amsterdam 1627)

*"Gentleman Cutting Tobacco while Woman Holds the Pipe"*

Oil on Panel

65,5 x 51 cm.

1620 - 25 ca.

Werner van der Valckert was born in The Hague but there is no record of the exact year. J. H. Goltzius was his teacher and greatly influenced his early works. Colors play an essential role in Valckert's works; for example the red used for the figures' cheeks, which are exaggerated. The figures stand out against the contrast of the dark backgrounds. This appears in all of his compositions; at times there are very bright spots, which give the works a very unique touch. On November 6th of 1605 he married Jannetje Cornelis van Montfoort in The Hague. According to the documentation of the time, it is known that in 1612 he became the Master of the Guild of Saint Luke in The Hague. Towards the beginning of Valckert's career he made excellent engravings and etchings, but around 1613 he dedicated his time exclusively to painting. As time went by, Goltzius' influence became less pronounced. The artist painted a great number of religious and moral works in which the viewer is able to see elongated figures feeding the poor, curing the sick, or blessing small children. Valckert shows deep knowledge of renaissance architecture and this can be seen as the background of some works. The artist influenced portraiture artist N. Elias. We are grateful to Dr. Fred G. Meijer of the Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD), The Hague for confirming Gentleman Cutting Tobacco while Woman Holds the Pipe as a work by Werner van den Valckert.



“Gentleman Cutting Tobacco while Woman Holds the Pipe” is a very intriguing painting because although it mainly shows two figures, it is considered a genre within an elegant environment. This particular work portrays a man dressed in winter clothes smoking his pipe while cutting some tobacco. Consequently, we are witnessing the daily life of the Dutch people during the 17th century. One of the most remarkable aspects of this piece is the man's facial expression, it seems to be restlessly posing but he is not engaging with the viewer. Despite the fact that he is in the middle of cutting tobacco, he is not focused or

looking at the cutting board. On the other hand, his eyes are looking far ahead. The man's forehead also has very deep wrinkles, therefore there is a possibility he is engaged in some sort of dialogue with the lady next to him. His expression is dreamy and makes the viewer question what his thoughts might be. Compared to other traditional Dutch genre scenes, the figure's facial features are distinctively highlighted and painted in a very refined manner. One might even consider that this piece embodies certain mannerism stylistic characteristics.

The man is wearing a fur hat that gently camouflages with his brown and reddish hair. Valckert's technique is so impressive that the painted fur seems to be tangible.

---



One of the most difficult features to paint are hands because it is challenging to portray them naturally and in a way that is pictorially pleasing. In this case, Valckert masterfully shows both hands cutting the tobacco in a very realistic way. The bent fingers are rested against the cutting board while the index and thumb are working together to cut the tobacco. The knuckles are slightly bent but the viewer can clearly see and feel the cutting motion and muscles at work. It is very surprising how even his nails are meticulously drawn to perfection.

It is important to note that the everyday people in the 17th century Dutch Republic viewed tobacco as a novelty and associated smoking with the social divide. A divide existed between the medicinal use of tobacco, which was widely accepted, and recreational use, which was seen as low class and inappropriate for more respected citizens including church and government leaders. Interestingly enough, smoking became a tool for artists to designate someone's rank in society, and painters including Adriaen Brouwer, the Ostade brothers, and David Teniers II employed smoking in their portrayals of the lower classes.

---



The other protagonist of the work is the woman next to the man who is holding his pipe while he cuts tobacco. Her hair is up in a bun and she is starring at him with an innocent and naïve expression. The eyes are wide open and it seems she is trying to be helpful and useful to the other figure. The most prominent factor of this segment is the red of her sleeves and the striking red hues of her cheeks. Due to the fact that most of the work is composed by using browns, dark greens, and ocher colors- the red brings the brightest tone to this piece.

---



The entire scene revolves around the man cutting tobacco while the woman holds up his pipe. In this fragment, we are able to see the woman's red sleeve that adds the second and last note of lively color to the painting. She is gently holding the long pipe close to the man's lips. This could have certain erotic connotations, in fact Jan Steen, perhaps one of the most prominent painters during the 17th century, often included pipe smoking, which took on sexual connotations in his paintings of brothels and taverns. Therefore, it would not be surprising if Valckert used the pipe as a metaphor or symbol in this piece.

---



On the lower right corner, there is a coal stove to warm up the room. This was the most common stove for heating in the industrial world for almost a century and a half. Coal stoves came in all sizes and shapes and different operating principles. It was primarily used to warm the hands during cold and harsh winter days. This element is also an allegory of the winter season, very symbolic and commonly represented in genre scenes.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY-**

Walther Bernt, The Netherlandish Painters of the Deventeenth Century, Vol. 3, p.121, plates 1222, 1223.-  
Catálogo All the Paintings of the Rijkmuseum in Amsterdam, p. 553 y 554  
- F. W. Huding, W. van den Valckert, Oud Holland, LIV, 1937, p. 54-56.  
- N. MacLaren, National Gallery Catalogues, Dutch School, Londres, 1960, p. 206.- E. Benezit,  
“Dictionnaire des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs et graveurs”, 1999, Vol. 11, p.716 y 717.

**PROVENANCE**

Private Collection, London.

**EXHIBITIONS**

Torino (Italia), Galleria Luigi Caretto, Flashback, November 2014.

**MUSEUMS**

Werner van den Valckert's works can be found in many museums around the world including:  
Amsterdam- Rijksmuseum, Copenhagen- Statens Museum for Kunst, Leiden- Boerhaave Museum,  
Utrecht- Archiepiscopal Museum, etc.

---

*Copyright © 2015 Soraya Cartategui Gallery, All rights reserved.*

[unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

The MailChimp logo is displayed in a white, cursive font on a grey rectangular background.