

Rare portrait of Simon Van Der Stel highlight of the National Antiques Faire

Only two portraits of Simon van der Stel, first governor of the Cape and the man who is credited with establishing South Africa's wine industry have been known to exist. Now, thanks to the sharp eye of antiques dealer Ricus Dullaert of Kunsthandel H.W.C Dullaert, of Amsterdam, Holland, who regularly exhibits in South Africa, a new portrait of Simon van der Stel has been discovered. The value of this portrait – both as a historical find and as an investment piece of art – is immeasurable and South Africans will have the privilege of viewing this valuable 17th Century painting by Baroque Dutch painter Pieter van Anraedt at the **National Antiques & Decorative Arts Faire** which takes place at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg from the 20 – 22nd July 2012.

Ricus Dullaert, a respected antiques dealer in Holland, who is a regular visitor to South Africa, both as an antique dealer and a missionary involved in AIDS work, saw the painting in a dusty warehouse in Amsterdam and was intrigued by what he saw. "I could see it was a 17th Century painting but puzzled by the fact that the Baroque gentleman was holding a bunch of grapes – unusual in that Holland is not a wine-growing region. I then noticed a mountain in the background which, in a rough way, resembled Table Mountain and I knew I was onto something." Ricus bought the painting and set about researching it to find out who the sitter was and who the painter was.

The most prestigious institute in the Netherlands that determines who sitters of portraits are and who the painters that an unsigned 17th century Dutch portrait should be attributed to is the Rijks Kunsthistorisch Documentatie Centrum (R.K.D) in the Hague in Netherlands. Professor Rudi Ekkart, a leading scientist in determining unknown sitters in portraits soon confirmed that the person depicted in the portrait was indeed Simon van der Stel, the first governor of the Cape and the person responsible for planting the first grapes in the Cape and for establishing the famous Groot Constantia wine estate. The only portrait of Simon van der Stel that scholars agree on of the famous Governor of the Cape was in the Napier Collection in Dublin but was destroyed by fire in 1962. Dr. W.H.J.Punt, director of the Simon van der Stel Foundation, traced another portrait said to depict Simon van der Stel. This portrait by the Dutch artist Cornelis van Eversdijck is signed and dated 1660. It was offered in an auction in London in 1937 but remained unsold. In 1941 it surfaced in the antique shop of the Jewish dealer K.W.Bachstitz in the Hague, the Netherlands where it was sold to become part of the collection of the prominent Nazi Hermann Goering. After the war it was returned to the Netherlands with a lot of other Dutch Old Master paintings and became part of the Collection Nederland.

Professor Rudi Ekkart was also able to identify the painter as Pieter van Anraedt, one of the famous Baroque Era Dutch painters. Pieter van Anraedt was born in 1635 in Utrecht in the Netherlands and died in 1678 in Deventer in the Netherlands. Pieter van Anraedt worked from 1672-1675 in Amsterdam and Simon van der Stel lived from 1668-1679 (when he left for the Cape) in Amsterdam. Pieter van Anraedt is a quite prominent painter of the Dutch Golden Age. Some of his more famous works that can be found in Dutch museums include:

-The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the most prominent museum in the Netherlands has a portrait from Pieter van Anraedt depicting the farewell of Ritmeester Hendrick de Sandra dated 1661. This portrait is bought by the Rijksmuseum in 1901 with the help of the prominent Dutch "Vereniging Rembrandt" (Rembrandt Association).

-The Mauritshuis in The Hague , the second best collection in the Netherlands of Old Masters paintings has a nature morte from Pieter van Anraedt with a stone jar and clay pipes circa 1658. It is bought by the museum in 1977 again with the help of the "Vereniging Rembrandt" (Rembrandt association).

-The Amsterdams Historisch Museum has three works of Pieter van Anraedt - one of the board of the Amsterdam Huiszittende Huis (a refuge for old and poor citizens), one of the Amsterdam mayor Lambert Reynst dated 1673 and one of Isaac Commelin, dated 1675.

Having established both the artist and sitter Ricus Dullaert turned his energies to finding out more about Simon van der Stel and his wine-making talents from South African historians. He started corresponding with Mr. J.B.Bedaux who published a very interesting article in 1988 titled: "The portraits of Simon van der Stel, First Governor of the Cape" published in Stellenbosch papers in linguistics, no.17, 1988. This article mentioned a very interesting book titled: "Simon van der Stel en sy kinders (Simon van der Stel and his children)", by A.J.Boeseken, Kaapstad 1964.

"After reading the article of J.B. Bedaux it dawned on me how rare a find of a portrait of Simon van der Stel is" says Ricus. "The book of A.J. Boeseken about the life of Simon van der Stel is even more fascinating." Simon van der Stel was born on 14 October 1639 on a Dutch merchant ship sailing from Batavia (present day Jakarta), the capital of the Dutch V.O.C. to Mauritius where his father Adrianus was appointed as commander of the island of Mauritius. The grandmother of Simon van der Stel was a slave from India called Da Coste de Goa and might have been a half-cast herself because her family name Da Costa is more than likely Portuguese. In 1646 Simon's father was appointed as commander of Ceylon and in the same year he was beheaded by the Sinhalese. Simon had to see the horrific sight of the head of his father stuck on a spear. After this drama Simon and his mother and sister returned to Batavia where his mother died in 1652. So at thirteen years old Simon was an orphan. When Simon was 20 years old he was sent to Amsterdam to further his studies.

In 1663 he married Johanna Jacoba Six of Amsterdam, the daughter of the mayor Willem Six, one of the most influential families of Amsterdam. Simon's mother-in-law re-married in 1658 to the wine merchant Jean Mariau. In the first years of their marriage Simon van der Stel and his wife Johanna Jacoba Siz lived in Haarlem. In 1668 or 1669 the couple returned to live in Amsterdam where their fifth son Henrico was born and baptized in the Zuiderkerk.

On the 1st December 1671 Simon van der Stel signed a contract with Johannes van Reede and commissioned him to look after his two vineyards in the village of Muiderberg for a period of eight years. Most likely he commissioned Van Reede to do so because war was looming and the Netherlands soon would be attacked by France, England and Germany in 1672. Johannes van Reede had to guard, weed, fertilize and harvest van der Stel's Muiderberg vineyards. He also had to make wine

from the harvested grapes. From the grapes that hadn't ripened in time he had to make brandy and sell the brandy. He is allowed to keep two thirds of the proceeds of the brandy he managed to sell and had to give van der Stel one third of the money earned with selling brandy. Furthermore there was a piece of uncultivated land between the two vineyards of Simon van der Stel. Van Reede had to plough the land and plant Russel vines on it. He would be paid 100 Dutch guilders when he started to plough this piece of land and 80 Dutch guilders when the work was done. Van Reede would get half of the proceeds of the Muiderberg vineyards.

On the 3rd December 1672 Simon van der Stel, 33 years old, draws up his last will and leaves all his early possessions to his 6 children and his wife Johanna Jacoba Six. Soon he is called to be commander of a company of 80 soldiers that has to defend Holland against the French and German invaders.

According to Ricus it is very likely that the portrait of Simon van der Stel that was discovered was painted in this period. "Most likely Simon van der Stel had himself painted as the Lord of the Muiderberg vineyards at the age of 33 before going into the war – a practice often done in those times in order to leave his children a tangible image of their father in the event of anything happening to him. This tallies with the years that Pieter van Anraedt worked in Amsterdam. I found a 17th century brass engraving from the Bohemian artist Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677) depicting the village of Muiderberg on the shores of the Zuiderzee. The mountain behind Simon van der Stel in the painting is most likely not Table Mountain in Cape Town but Muiderberg in the Netherlands with Simon van der Stel as the proud wine planter in the foreground."

The rest of the story is well known to South Africans. On the 18th March 1679 Simon van der Stel is chosen to become the first Governor of the Cape by the board of directors of the Dutch East India Company (VOC). On the ship "Vrije Zee" he sails with his six children and the sister of his wife Cornelia to the Cape. On his fortieth birthday, on 14th October 1679, he is officially installed as Governor of the Cape - an office that he holds for 20 years. Among the numerous enterprises he spearheaded was the planting of 100.000 vines in Rondebosch and the founding of Stellenbosch on 3rd November 1679. On the 13th July 1685 Simon van der Stel gets a large tract of land with the help of the VOC commander Rijckloff Goens. There he builds Groot Constantia, his famous country seat and world famous wine farm.

As the pieces of the puzzle come together with input from both the experts in Holland and the historians in South Africa, the fascination of this story continues. Ricus Dullaert believes that as Pieter van Anraedt died on 13th April 1678, the painting of Simon van der Stel must thus have been painted before this date. "However Simon van der Stel was only appointed governor of the Cape in 1679. Did Simon van der Stel already know that he was going to the Cape and that he would be involved in growing grapes when this painting was painted? Every answer brings new questions!"

"Finding this rare portrait of Simon van der Stel in a dusty warehouse in Amsterdam is an important find in itself but discovering a portrait of him with the symbolic grapes that were to become the seeds of South Africa's very own wine industry makes this painting all the more relevant. The portrait will be exhibited and offered for sale to the

South African public at the National Antiques & Decorative Arts Faire which takes place at the Sandton Convention Centre in Sandton, Johannesburg from the 20 – 22nd July 2012.

Bibliography:

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- J.B. Bedaux, The portraits of Simon van der Stel, First Governor of the Cape. Stellenbosch papers in linguistics, 17, 1988.
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