

*Gonzales Coques (1614–1684): Der kleine Van Dyck.* Marion Lisken-Pruss. *Pictura Nova: Studies in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Flemish Painting and Drawing* 13. Turnhout: Brepols, 2013. 496 pp. €125.

---

---

This book is an updated version of the author's 2002 PhD thesis on the Antwerp artist Gonzales Coques (1614–84). This well-researched scholarly monograph, comprising an extensive catalogue raisonné, studies an Antwerp small-portrait painter, administrator, and art dealer who was appreciatively and affectionately known as the “little Van Dyck.” Coques was famous for his sophisticated small-format portraits, inventively crafted and suited to the taste, aspirations, and purses of middle-class citizens. His sitters were arranged in seemingly informal poses but with telling accessories and a setting that shows their economic position and that also hints at their social aspirations. In his compositions the artist often crossed into other genres, such as allegories, art cabinets, and flower painting.

Lisken-Pruss's study consists of an introduction and a biography treating family, artistic beginnings, work for the house of Orange, activities after 1650, and, lastly, Coques's patrons. The works of Coques are studied in three chapters, from self-portraits, artists' portraits, and cabinets to (allegorical) family or group portraits, to portraits of single sitters. The catalogue presents fifty-six concise entries in chronological order, followed by fifty-six lost but documented works, and twenty-seven doubtful paintings. Lastly, five drawings complete this extensive part. The painter's style is discussed in detail, taking into account Van Dyck's towering influence, without, however, neglecting Peter Paul Rubens and Cornelis De Vos.

Gonzales Coques's reputation arose from his first artistic endeavors in 1639/40. He worked with and for Anthony Van Dyck, but had actually been an apprentice of Pieter Brueghel the Younger and David II Ryckaert, finally marrying into this dynasty. Coques also held various high corporate positions, proving his position within the artistic milieu. Next to portraits of citizens, patrons from the international elite, aristocracy, and royalty also commissioned works from him. In 1671 he rose to court painter. His free fluid manner remained popular with his clients through the final decade of his life. During his long career as a figure painter he often collaborated with other artists, such as Frans Francken the Younger, benefiting from his colleagues' skills, client networks, and inspiration.

This monograph is a valuable contribution to the history of the Southern Netherlandish portrait. It is the first monograph on the artist. The large number of wrongly attributed paintings (106, according to the catalogue) testifies to the necessity of this study. As the author focuses firmly on the artist and his work, she somewhat neglects other topics, such as the role of artists like David Teniers the Younger, the role of other artistic centers such as Brussels, and the social and economic role of dealers and patrons. The inclusion of a selection of relevant archival documents in an annex would have been interesting. On the artistic level, one hopes that this study can become a starting point for material and technical research on the artist. Indeed, nothing much is known about the studio of Coques, although we know that he had two apprentices. Issues such as workshop procedures, collaboration with other artists, and copying practices are, we hope, food for future research.

Natasja Peeters, *Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History of Belgium*