

### 55. Portrait of Josua van Belle

1670

Oil on canvas, 124 × 102 cm

National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin

Inv. No.: NGL.30

Copy of an old inscription on the reverse of the canvas before a lining: "Josua van Belle / Barto<sup>me</sup> Muri / llo en Sevilla an<sup>o</sup> de 1670".

**Provenance:** Josua van Belle's collection in Seville from 1670; later presumably in Rotterdam, in the possession of Van Belle's heirs, until purchased for the National Gallery of Ireland in London, 1866, for £100 (Grant-in-Aid).

Josua van Belle (1637–1710) was a Dutch shipping merchant from Rotterdam who lived for a time in Cádiz and in Seville, where his presence is documented from 1663. In Cádiz there are records of Van Belle's business dealings with the Flemish merchant Carlos Licht, governor of the Flemish consulate.<sup>1</sup>

After returning home from Spain, Van Belle also held several positions of authority. From 1676 to 1710 he served on the city council (*vroedschap*) of Rotterdam,<sup>2</sup> first as an alderman or *schepen* and later as burgomaster (1705–1706) and treasurer (1707–1708).<sup>3</sup> Between 1677 and 1710, he was a representative to the States of Holland and governor of the Rotterdam chamber of the Dutch East India Company.

At his palatial Rotterdam home, Van Belle amassed a substantial art collection that included Johannes Vermeer's *Woman Writing a Letter with her Maid*, now in the same Irish museum.<sup>4</sup> After Van Belle's death, the house and the entire collection were inherited by his son and namesake (1680–1738), who in 1730 put many of the works up for sale, but not the portrait of his father, which must have stayed in the family.<sup>5</sup> The family home was redecorated with new murals in 1730–1733,<sup>6</sup> some of which are held in the Museum Rotterdam, which explains the sale of the collection, a common practice in the Netherlands at the time.

Murillo painted the portrait of Van Belle in 1670, shortly before his return to Holland. Van Belle was certainly in Rotterdam by 1675, when he married the burgomaster's daughter

ter Catharina van der Meyden there,<sup>7</sup> and perhaps even by July 1670, when a Rotterdam document mentions him being named godfather to one of his nephews.<sup>8</sup> In 1676 he is recorded in Waddinxveen, where he was the manorial lord, offering a procuration.<sup>9</sup> It is not unlikely that the portrait was commissioned in preparation for his impending nuptials and homecoming.

Navarrete has suggested that the portrait in the Cintas Foundation could be second likeness of the Dutch shipping merchant, based on the obvious physical resemblance (the sitter is even wearing the same clothes), although this evidence alone is not conclusive (fig. 1).<sup>10</sup> The Florida picture might easily be a portrait of one of Van Belle's two brothers, who also lived in Cádiz and Seville: Jacob van Belle, also in shipping,<sup>11</sup> and Pieter or Pedro van Belle, who founded a slave trading company with Balthasar Coymans (1652–1686) and other Genoese merchants.<sup>12</sup>

Be that as it may, the Dublin picture, which must have originally been a full-length portrayal, has long been considered one of Murillo's finest portraits. A connection to the tradition of Dutch portraiture has been suggested, arguing that the sitter may have referred Murillo to formal Dutch sources present in Seville which were probably close to the style of Bartholomeus van der Helst's portraits. However, the northern European echoes in the style of this portrait can be explained by the Flemish tradition of court portraiture in Spain, based primarily on models established by Rubens and Van Dyck and continued by Velázquez and Carreño. Murillo had a chance to study them in Madrid and incorporate them in other portraits, such as those of the Duke of Frías in the Louvre (cat. no. 52) and the Marquis of Legarda (cat. no. 54). The shirt worn by the latter is also similar to the garment pictured in the Dublin and Florida portraits, and even in the London self-portrait, which seems to contradict the theory that the sitter's costume is distinctively Dutch in origin.

The picture was acquired by the Irish gallery in London in 1866. Its provenance prior to that date is unknown, though it may have remained in Holland in the possession of one of Van Belle's heirs.

Eduardo Lamas Delgado

**52. Portrait of Íñigo Melchor Fernández de Velasco**

- <sup>1</sup> The guinea was a gold coin used in the United Kingdom before the decimal system was adopted in 1971, equivalent to 21 shillings.

**53. Portrait of Andrés de Andrade y la Cal**

- <sup>1</sup> Navarrete 2017, p. 223.  
<sup>2</sup> 343. Retrato de D. Andrés de Andrade. 2,00 × 1,18. Copia de Murillo por J. Gutiérrez de la Vega. R. 334. C. 569. Tormo, p. 115. Cat. 1929, pág. 78." *Inventario de las pinturas de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando*, Madrid, 1964.  
<sup>3</sup> Gower 1885, pp. 10–11.  
<sup>4</sup> Sotheby's, London, 18 October 1995, *Old Master Paintings*, lot 62. Disciple of B.E. Murillo, *Portrait of Don Andrés de Andrade y La Cal*, oil on canvas, 209.7 × 115 cm.

**54. Portrait of Antonio Hurtado de Salcedo, Marquis of Legarda**

- <sup>1</sup> Pérez Sánchez 2005, pp. 178–179.  
<sup>2</sup> Navarrete 2017, p. 260.  
<sup>3</sup> Archivo Histórico de la Nobleza, ES.45168.SNAHN/59// Legarda.  
<sup>4</sup> Navarrete 2017, p. 260.  
<sup>5</sup> Silva 2011, p. 55. D. Francisco Fernández de Navarrete y López de Montenegro, in a letter dated 23 July 1982.  
<sup>6</sup> Alonso Martínez de Espinar, *El arte de ballestería y montería*, Madrid, 1644; ed. 1976, p. 206.  
<sup>7</sup> Idem, p. 218.

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- <sup>1</sup> In this documentation, Van Belle is mentioned as Joseph Ybanbely: Quiles 2008a, p. 306.  
<sup>2</sup> Hazewinkel 1932, p. 37.  
<sup>3</sup> Van Ravesteyn 1899, p. 113, no. 1.  
<sup>4</sup> NGI.4535.  
<sup>5</sup> On the 1730 sale, see Lugt 1938, p. 402; Hoet 1752, vol. 1, pp. 352–360.  
<sup>6</sup> Inv. 36417.  
<sup>7</sup> Gouda, Streekarchief Midden-Holland, *Doop-, trouw- en begraafboeken: hervormde trouwboeken + gaarders trouwen*, DTB1b.  
<sup>8</sup> Angulo 1981, vol. 2, p. 315.  
<sup>9</sup> Gouda, Streekarchief Midden-Holland, 0499. 64.  
<sup>10</sup> Stratton 2002, p. 190.  
<sup>11</sup> Angulo 1981, vol. 2, pp. 314–315.  
<sup>12</sup> *Pertinent en waarachtig verhaal van alle de handelingen en directie van Pedro Van Belle, ontrent den Slavenhandel, ofte, jet Asien-to de Negros, eerst D. Juan Barosso y Posso, bij zijn overlijden door D. Nicolas Porfio, en daar na door Balihasar Coijmans met den Koning van Spagnien aangegaan, zoo in Spagnien, de West-Indijes, als op Curaçao*, Rotterdam, 1689.