

# KOETSER GALLERY LTD.

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## LUMEN PORTENGEN

Utrecht 1608/09 - 1649

*The Concert.*

Oil on canvas, 138 x 178 cm  
Signed in full top right: *L.Portengen*



*Provenance:* Collection Leo S. Olschki, Florence, 1912;  
Cesare Olschki Collection, Pisa, 1966;  
Sale Christie's London, 14 April 1978, lot 12;  
Sale Sotheby's London, 16 June 1980, lot 166;  
Sale Paris, Me Laurin, 25 March 1982, lot 60;  
Private Collection, France.

*Literature:* E. Rosenthal, "Ein Bild des Utrechter Malers Luemen van Portengen",  
*Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft*, 1912, vol. V, pp. 378-380 and pl. 83;  
A.Von Schneider, *Caravaggio und die Niederländer*, 1933, pp.83-84, no. 138;  
W.Van Watering, *Oude Holland*, 1967, vol. LXXXII, pp. 148, 152, pl. 8;  
B.Nicolson, *Caravaggism in Europe*, Turin, 1989, vol. I, pl. 156; vol. III, pl.  
1358.  
T. Borgogelli, Parma per l'Arte, *Per una ivalutazione di Lumen Portengen (Utrecht ca.  
1608-1649)*

Lumen Portengen was not the only Portengen family member active in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as an artist. His brother Roetert (date of birth unknown-Utrecht 1659) and cousin Petrus (1606/1612 Utrecht 1643) too were registered artists with the Utrecht Guild of St. Lukes. Both Petrus and Lumen became member of the Guild in 1638. Of the 3 artist today, Lumen is considered the most versatile of the 3 artist. This may in part be due to the fact that most works by him are known. His paintings, dating from the second half of the thirties and early forties, depict historical and genre scenes in the manner of Utrecht Caravaggesque painters.

In 1988 Paul Huys Janssen, while doing archival research made a remarkable discovery. In his article, *Nieuws over Lumen Portengen; een attestatie uit 1639*<sup>1</sup>, he writes that he

<sup>1</sup> Oud Holland Jaargang/Vol 102-1988 nr. 3, pp247-248.

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encountered a notorial deed where 2 artists; Lumen Portengen and Johannes Luyt attested the following information to a Utrecht notary. Lumen stated that he was 30 years of age. This revealing for the first time with certainly the year of his birth: 1608. The artist attested to the time it would take to walk from St. Peter's Basilica to the Capitolium in Rome. Lumen states that he resided in Rome for a period of 1.5 years.

Our painting '*The Concert*' has long been considered one of his most ambitious and most successful works. It was first published as such by Erwin Rosenthal in 1912. Rosenthal noted the compositional similarities of Musical Groups with works by Gerrit van Honthorst. A. von Schneider came to the same conclusion in 1933. '*The Concert*' was painted in the early forties, and is compositionally related to similar scenes by Gerrit van Honthorst and perhaps inspired by the work of Simon Peter Tilman. Tilman owned a painting by Petrus or Roetert Portengen and it is not unlikely to think that they may have come into contact personally while he stayed in Utrecht.

We are grateful to Tomasso Borgogelli who is currently working on a forthcoming article "For a revaluation of Lumen Portengen". In this article Borgogelli presents 5 new additions to the oeuvre of Lumen. For our painting Borgogelli proposes a chronological origination of 'The Concert' after his return to Utrecht: the numerous similarities with the other *Concert*, dated 1642, in the Musée de Tessé in Le Mans (France) and the *Suicide Scene* in Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lille tend to prove this date around 1642 The same Roman jacket, with the same decorations, can be found in works by Caravaggio, Régnier and Tournier. It was thought that Portengen had produced his most accomplished and innovative paintings during his short stay in Italy but our painting is proving the contrary and is therefore a huge discovery in Portengen's body of work.



Fig. 1 Detail of signature.