

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.

*We are grateful to Tommaso Borgogelli for including our painting in his forthcoming article "For a revaluation of Lumen Portengen" and for dating this painting to the 1630's when Portengen spent 1.5 years in Rome.

Lumen Portengen was not the only Portengen family member active in the 17th 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 artists today, Lumen is considered the most versatile of the 3 artists. 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*¹, he writes that he

¹ 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 his most ambitious and most successful work. 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 thirties, 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 Roertert 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 Tommaso 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' during the mysterious stay in Italy for three reasons: the qualitative difference with the later and Dutch paintings, its provenance from an Italian collection, but above all because the "inclined" boy to the left of the singer seems to be wearing a typical Roman jacket. The same Roman jacket, with the same decorations, can be found in works by Caravaggio, Régnier and Tournier. Therefore, the painting must have been executed while Lumen Portengen resided in Rome in the early thirties. Two of these paintings Borgogelli suggests were painted during Lumen Portengens' 1.5 year stay in Rome. The previously unknown Lute Player and the second painting a wonderful 'Buona Ventura' by candlelight. It is the second painting that is of particular interest to us as one of the central figures on the right of the composition is 'absolutely the same girl in the center of our painting'². It is during these early years that Lumen produced his most accomplished, innovative paintings.



Fig. 1 Detail of signature.

² Correspondence with Tommaso Bogogelli June 2022.