

Holbein's Portraits of the Steelyard Merchants: An Investigation

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HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER arrived in London for the second time in 1532, probably sometime after May 16, when his friend and former patron Sir Thomas More resigned from office. No longer able to rely upon More's influence to obtain commissions, Holbein found employment from his fellow countrymen, members of the Steelyard, the German business community in London. Through these individual commissions, he was able to reestablish his reputation, and in 1536 he was appointed court painter to Henry VIII. The eight certain portraits of the Steelyard Merchants are those of Georg Gisze, Hans of Antwerp, and Hermann Wedigh [III], painted in 1532; a Member of the Wedigh Family ("Hermann Hillebrandt Wedigh"), Dirk Tybis, Cyriacus Kale, and Derich Born, painted in 1533; and Derick Berck, 1536.¹ Inscriptions, dates, coats of arms, and merchant marks incorporated by Holbein in the portraits allow us to identify his sitters with some degree of assurance, and this information, correlated with surviving records, may increase our understanding of their significance.

A list of frequently cited sources is given at the end of this article.

1. Paul Ganz, *The Paintings of Hans Holbein the Younger* (London, 1950) pp. 238–241, 246, catalogues these eight portraits (nos. 61, 62, 65–69, 87). In addition, Ganz catalogues three roundels, two of Hans of Antwerp (nos. 63, 64) and one of Derich Born (no. 70). He also discusses four portraits as probably of Hanseatic merchants: nos. 77 (unidentified), 101 (unidentified, now at Yale University Art Gallery), 115 (unidentified), and 148 (a miniature, called Heinrich von Schwarzwald from Danzig), respectively dated 1533, 1538, 1541, and 1543. The three roundels and four other portraits contain no inscriptions, letters, or other marks that are germane to this study. The iden-

At the time these portraits were painted, the German merchants in London, many of them resident representatives, if not actual members, of the Hanseatic League, enjoyed trade privileges and political power far in excess of their English counterparts. Like the other Hanseatic merchants throughout Europe, they often functioned as a communications link between cities and heads of state. Their residence and place of business, a walled area on the north bank of the Thames just south of London Bridge, was in effect a separate community, independent of the city of London and governed by its own strict code of laws, which were enforced by the merchants' native cities. It was called the Steelyard, in German the *Stahlhof*, either in reference to the great steel beam used for weighing goods, or to the courtyard where goods were bought and sold from stalls.²

For all the importance of the Steelyard, documentation of its activity and membership is scarce. It was closed temporarily by royal decree in 1598, and its guildhall was looted and vandalized. The hall, with its contents, suffered such extensive damage in the

tification of Ganz no. 148 is based on research by Habich, see below, note 8. As for Ganz nos. 77, 101, and 115, their classification as "merchant" portraits seems to have been based on the similarity of dress of the sitters.

2. On the Steelyard see: Johann M. Lappenberg, *Urkundliche Geschichte des Hansischen Stahlhofes zu London* (Hamburg, 1851) pp. 72–87; Rheinhold Pauli, *Pictures of Old England* (London, 1861) pp. 176–203; Ian D. Colvin, *The Germans in England 1066–1598* (London, 1915) pp. 150–154; Elizabeth Gee Nash, *The Hansa* (New York, 1929) pp. 116–117, 164–178; Phillippe Dollinger, *The German Hanse* (Stanford, 1970) p. 102; Joseph and Frances Gies, *Merchants and Money men* (New York, 1972) pp. 157–158.



FIGURE 1

Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/98–1543), *Georg Gisze*, 1532. Tempera and oil on wood, $37\frac{1}{16} \times 33\frac{3}{4}$ in. (96.3 \times 85.7 cm.). West Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz (photo: Gemäldegalerie, Jörg P. Anders)

Great Fire of 1666 that it had to be rebuilt. Investigation into the background of Holbein's sitters has therefore to be pursued through often obscure and sketchy records of merchants' correspondence and bills of sale, old publications, and unpublished archives.

The portrait of Georg Gisze of Danzig (Figure 1), painted in 1532, has traditionally been regarded as Holbein's first commission upon his return to England. This detail-laden composition may have been intended as a show piece to elicit further Steelyard commissions, just as *The Ambassadors* in 1533 would have attracted royal attention.³ Holbein may also have been influenced by the Flemish artist Jan Gossaert, called Mabuse. In the early 1530s, Mabuse painted the portrait of a banker, thought to be Jerome Sandelin of Zeeland (Figure 2), and Holbein could in fact have seen this on his way to England.⁴ His portrait of Gisze is similar in its diagonal composition, the treatment of costume and office paraphernalia, the precise brushwork, and the serious, outward-directed stare of the sitter.⁵

Holbein's sitter is identified in the inscriptions, which contain various spellings of his family name (Appendix 1–7, Figures 11–15). Since the Hanseatic community received correspondence from people speaking a variety of languages and dialects, the practice of spelling phonetically was not unusual. The letter Gisze holds, sent by a brother (Appendix 3), is written in the sixteenth-century German of the north country, in a dialect in use from 1520 to 1550.⁶ Georg Gisze, the twelfth of thirteen children, is recorded as a member of a Danzig merchant family, the son of town-councillor Albert Giese.⁷ The family had emigrated in 1430 from Unna, near Giesen, northeast of Cologne.⁸ Such a Rhenish origin may explain the derivation of the surname, Giese or Gisze.

3. Chamberlain, p. 3.

4. In 1533, Erasmus of Rotterdam noted that Holbein, before his arrival in London the previous year, had "lingered in Antwerp for over a month" (Alois Gerlo, *Erasmus et ses portraitistes Metsijs, Dürer, Holbein* [Nieuwoop, 1969] pp. 63–67). Holbein could have taken this opportunity to visit Mabuse, who lived until his death—between September 12 and October 13, 1532—near the North Sea coast in Middelburg, Zeeland (J. K. Steppe, "La Date de décès de Jean Gossaert," *Jean Gossaert dit Mabuse*, exh. cat. [Rotterdam/Brussels, 1965] pp. 34–35).

5. See Jakob Rosenberg, "A Portrait of a Banker (Jerome



FIGURE 2

Jan Gossaert (Mabuse) (1478–1532), *A Banker*, ca. 1530. Oil on wood, 25 × 18¾ in. (63.6 × 47.5 cm.). Washington, D. C., National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 1967 (photo: National Gallery)

Sandelin?) by Jan Gossaert, Called Mabuse," *Report and Studies in the History of Art* 1967 (Washington, D. C.: National Gallery of Art) pp. 39–43.

6. Freytag, p. 110.

7. Ibid., p. 111. Extensive records concerning Georg Gisze and the Gisze family of Danzig appear in Konstantin Höhlbaum's *Inventare Hansischer Archive des Sechzehnten Jahrhunderts*: III. *Danziger Inventar* (Leipzig, 1896).

8. Freytag, p. 111; Georg Habich, "Ein Miniaturbildnis von Hans Holbein in Danzig," *Zeitschrift für Bildende Kunst* 24 (1913) p. 196.

As an additional means of identification, the armorial ring lying on the table depicts arms⁹ which were granted by King Sigismund of Poland to one of the Danzig Gises, and which were also used by Georg's brother Tiedemann, who was a canon of Kulm (now Chelmno, Poland) at the time the picture was painted.¹⁰ Tiedemann's bishop, Johannes von Höfen, alias Dantiscus or Danziger, was an admirer of Erasmus and tried in 1531 to obtain a version of Holbein's portrait of the humanist. Holbein may have been traveling in northern Germany at the time, between Basel (which he left in 1531/32) and Antwerp (where he arrived in 1532), most probably via Cologne. Tiedemann Gise, perhaps aware of Holbein's journey to England, could have advised his brother Georg of the painter's impending arrival.¹¹ This may account for the letter from a brother that Gise is holding in the portrait.

Georg Gise's name first occurs in England in a protection order, an assurance of safe passage between England and France, dated June 26, 1522, granted by the king of France. It is further recorded that, during the absence of Steelyard representatives to Francis I, "George Guyse" and "Th. Crumwell of London, gent." (whose portrait Holbein was to paint in 1534) were given power of attorney.¹² Eleven years later in 1533, a letter refers to "Geo. Gyes" as the Alderman's Deputy of the London Steelyard, an important position which may have led to the commission of this portrait.¹³

The inscriptions, the *cartellino*, and the vase of flowers in Gise's portrait remind us of the transitory nature of this world.¹⁴ The inscription on the *cartellino* translates in part as follows: "This picture of Georg that you see records his features / Such lively eyes, such cheeks has he / In the year of his age 34 / In the year of the Lord 1532" (Appendix 1). Georg

Gise was born on April 2, 1497 and died in February 1562.¹⁵ Holbein records Gise's age as thirty-four, despite the fact that he would almost certainly have been thirty-five years old at the time. This discrepancy is explained by the German custom according to which only the number of years fully completed (*Lebensjahre vollendete*) are recorded, rather than the actual age of the sitter.¹⁶

Londoners, Georg Gise among them, were threatened by bubonic plague, which was especially prevalent around the Steelyard. In 1532, when this portrait was painted, "the pattern of bubonic plague [had become] manifest in England. . . . The epidemic disease had a seasonal incidence in the summer and early autumn months . . . London with its great port was its chief focus and principal disseminating centre."¹⁷ The prevalence of the disease caused Henry VIII to flee London in 1531 and 1532, and by October 1532, according to Venetian dispatches, the plague had reached epidemic proportions and was creating panic in the city.¹⁸

Gise's personal motto is written on the office wall: "Nulla sine merore voluptas" or "No joy without sorrow," a reference either to the transitory nature of his current situation or to the general uncertainty of fortune (Appendix 2). It may have been adapted from *Metamorphoses*, Book VII, lines 453–454, where Ovid interrupts the account of Theseus' reunion with his father Aegeus with the words "Nulla est sincera voluptas; / (Sollicitique aliquid laetis intervenit)," or "No joy is unmixed; (Some care always comes to mar our joys)." Perhaps Georg Gise was thinking of his own safe return and reunion with his family.

In the foreground of the portrait is a vase filled partly with water and containing various plants: three carnations, sprigs of rosemary and basil, and a wall-flower.¹⁹ Since the carnation is a traditional symbol of

9. A shield divided per fess, a lion issuant in chief, a fess in base (I owe this description to Helmut Nickel). See also Habich, "Miniaturbildnis," p. 196.

10. Ibid.; Johann Siebmacher, *J. Siebmacher's Grosses und Allgemeines Wappenbuch*, trans. Gustav V. Seyler (Nuremberg, 1888) V, pt. 4, p. 55 and pl. 64. Paul Simon, *Geschichte der Stadt Danzig (1517–1626)* (Danzig, 1924; Valen, 1967) II, p. 125, notes that Canon Gise became bishop of Kulm in 1544.

11. Gerlo, *Erasmus . . . Holbein*, pp. 56–60; Freytag, pp. 113–114.

12. Chamberlain, p. 6, cites *State Papers*, III, pt. 2, nos. 2350, 2446, 2447, and 2754.

13. Chamberlain, p. 6, cites *State Papers*, VI, no. 1170, and p. 3, notes the importance of the post.

14. Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin, *Katalog der Ausgestellten Gemälde des 13.–18. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin-Dahlem, 1975) p. 204.

15. Freytag, p. 111.

16. Ibid., pp. 111–112.

17. J.F.D. Shrewsbury, *A History of the Bubonic Plague in the British Isles* (Cambridge, 1970) pp. 157, 167–70.

18. Ibid., p. 168.

19. Elizabeth Wolffhardt, "Beiträge zur Pflanzensymbolik," *Zeitschrift für Kunstwissenschaft* 8 (1954), p. 193. Floyd Swink,

betrothal, and since the interpretation of carnations and rosemary has been linked with an amorous Swabian folksong,²⁰ it has generally been thought that this commission was intended to demonstrate Gisze's intention to marry.²¹ In fact, he married Christine Krüger of Danzig three years later, in 1535.²²

All the plants, on the other hand, may also be regarded as medicinal herbs. In John Gerard's *Herbal* (London, 1597), the author says of the carnation "that the rootes are commended against infection of the plague [and] . . . the falling sicknesse."²³ Carnations were also used both as tokens of remembrance and as a means of protection against disease, a custom more commonly associated with rosemary. Rosemary became the symbol of remembrance because of its lingering scent, and Sir Thomas More wrote, "I let it run all over my garden wall . . . because it is the herb sacred to remembrance, and therefore of friendship," and "a sprig of it hath a dumb language that maketh it the chosen emblem at our funeral wakes in our burial ground."²⁴ In the funeral scene in William Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress* (1732), it is noted that "sprigs of rosemary were . . . given to each of the mourners. . . . This custom might probably originate at a time when the plague depopulated the metropolis, and rosemary was deemed antidote against con-

tagion."²⁵ Basil, an aromatic herb of the mint family, used both in cookery and medicine, derives its name from the basilisk, a legendary serpent against which it was thought to provide protection.²⁶ As for the wallflower, a member of the mustard family, it was also commonly used in cookery and for medicinal purposes. Near the vase is a table clock, which, like the hourglass accompanying the figure of Death in Holbein's *Dance of Death* (1526), reminds the living of Death's presence and the passage of time.

Attached to the sitter's office wall are letters bearing identical symbols, known as merchant marks (Appendix 4, 6, 7).²⁷ The attribution of these merchant marks to Georg Gisze is based on a document of the Danzig Assembly, dated October 30, 1535, which identified goods marked with the same symbol as belonging to "Jorg Gisse."²⁸ The same mark, in reverse, appears within a shield on the seal lying on the table (Appendix 10). Little is known of the origin of merchant marks, but the emblems were linked to the runic alphabet, and were later combined with varieties of crosses, with geometric forms resembling the mast and yards of a merchant ship, and even with the initials of the mark's owner.²⁹ Within the Hanseatic community, the merchant mark functioned as a symbol of identification, ownership, or workmanship in

taxonomist of Morton Arboretum, Lisle, Illinois, in 1977 identified the four plants for this investigation, independently of Wolffhardt's article. From color photographs, he described the plants as *Dianthus caryophyllus*, *Rosmarinus officinalis*, *Ocimum basilicum*, and *Cheiranthus cheiri*, or carnation, rosemary, sweet basil, and wallflower, which agrees with Wolffhardt's identification. Staatliche Museen Berlin, *Katalog*, p. 204, identified the plants as carnation, rosemary, hyssop, and a member of the mustard family (which the wallflower is); Dr. Wilhelm H. Köhler of the Berlin Museum, in a conversation in 1977, felt that the identification of basil, rather than of hyssop, was probably valid. Deborah Markow, "Hans Holbein's Steelyard Portraits, Reconsidered," *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 40 (1978) p. 43, identifies the last two plants as *Chenopodium bonus henricus* (Good King Henry) and *Arabidopsis thaliana* (thale-cress), but these plants are not botanically related to those painted by Holbein with such evident care. Markow further connects thale-cress with the German coin *Thaler*, origin of the word dollar, as a reference to the merchant profession; in fact, thale-cress was named after the German physician and botanist Johann Thale (1542–83).

20. Wolffhardt, "Pflanzensymbolik," p. 193. Ganz, *Holbein*, p. 223, no. 23, notes that Anna, the burgomaster's daughter in Holbein's *Darmstadt Madonna* (1528–30), is wearing a bridal wreath; Ganz cites Burckhardt who could only trace back such a custom to the seventeenth century. From a detail of a color photograph, the wreath appears to be made of carnation and

rosemary. The wreath may indeed refer to betrothal, or perhaps to some form of protection, since the Meyer family is kneeling before the Madonna.

21. Freytag, p. 114; Staatliche Museen Berlin, *Katalog*, p. 204.

22. Freytag, p. 114.

23. Pierpont Morgan Library, *Flowers of Ten Countries*, exh. cat. (New York, 1947) p. 44, no. 60.

24. Arnold Whittick, *Symbols, Signs, and Their Meaning* (London, 1960) p. 248.

25. John Ireland, *Hogarth Illustrated* (London, 1793) I, p. 22. Holbein's portrait of Lady Guildford (1527), St. Louis Museum of Art, shows what appears to be a sprig of rosemary pinned to her bodice.

26. Geoffrey Grigson, *A Dictionary of English Plant Names* (London, 1974) p. 20; Vernon Quin, *Leaves: Their Place in Life and Legend* (New York, 1937) p. 89. Hyssop, like basil, was used to prevent contagion from the plague, as noted in the *Hortus Sanitatis* of 1485.

27. Edward M. Elmhirst, *Merchant Marks* (London, 1959) p. 9, l. 3, no. 429.

28. Habich, "Miniaturbildnis," p. 196.

29. F. W. Kuhlicke, "Merchant Marks and the Like—Their Origin and Use," *Transactions of the Monumental Brass Society* 9, pt. 2, no. 72 (Oct. 1952) pp. 60–65.



FIGURE 3

Holbein, *Hans of Antwerp*, 1532. Tempera and oil on wood, $24 \times 18\frac{7}{16}$ in. (61×46.8 cm.). Windsor, The Royal Collection (reproduced by kind permission of H. M. the Queen, crown copyright reserved)

the form of a family, house, property, or trade mark.³⁰ Underlying the original merchant mark was an element of mystery or magic, which had the purpose of invoking protection, success, or prosperity, like lucky signs or amulets.³¹ The Latin cross, a symbol of protection, is incorporated in the merchant marks of Georg Gisze and the other sitters (Appendix

21, 22, 24, 27), and the use of Gisze's own mark on letters sent to him by Hans Stolten and Georg of Basel (Appendix 4, 6) was intended to ensure their delivery from abroad.

The portrait generally thought to have followed that of Georg Gisze is of the Hanseatic merchant and goldsmith Hans or John of Antwerp (Figure 3), which is dated July 26, 1532 (Appendix 11, 12). Hans of Antwerp resided in London from as early as 1515 to as late as 1547, and was married to an Englishwoman by whom he had children. He collaborated with Holbein in fine metalwork projects, was witness and administrator of Holbein's will, and was employed as both jeweler and court courier by Sir Thomas Cromwell.³² As Holbein noted, the sitter was associated with the London Steelyard (Appendix 11). In fact, he may have combined the activities of goldsmith and merchant, as is perhaps indicated by the duke of Suffolk's employment of "John Van Andwerp" to search for a gold mine, in June 1534.³³ The letter W within the seal lying on the table is clearly not the initial of the sitter, who is noted in parish records as "John Vander Gow, alieas John Andwerp";³⁴ it appears also in the portrait of Hermann Wedigh discussed below, and may symbolize association with the merchant guild of Cologne.

Since Hans of Antwerp spent most of his life in London, it seems unlikely that this portrait was sent abroad, which may account for its early entry into the Royal Collection.³⁵ (It was perhaps through Holbein's

30. Ibid.; Theodor Hirsch, *Handels- und Gewerbsgeschichte Danzigs* (Leipzig, 1935) II, p. 79.

31. Kuhlicke, "Merchant Marks," pp. 60–61, 70; Hugh William Davies, *Devices of the Early Printer 1457–1560* (London, 1935) p. 79.

32. Lionel Cust, "John of Antwerp, Goldsmith, and Hans Holbein," *Burlington Magazine* 8 (1906) pp. 356–360; Chamberlain, pp. 8–15; Oliver Millar, *The Tudor, Stuart and Early Georgian Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen* (London, 1963) p. 59, no. 29; E. Alfred Jones, "Two Foreign Goldsmiths and Jewellers of Henry VIII," *Apollo* 36 (1942) pp. 85–86; *State Papers*, VII, no. 1688, records an entry written by Cornelius Hayes, goldsmith, in which "Hance, painter (most probably

Hans Holbein) received payment of 20 shillings for the painting of a silver Adam and Eve in 1534."

33. Chamberlain, p. 11, cites *State Papers*, VII, no. 800.

34. Ibid., p. 12.

35. Oliver Millar, *Abraham van der Doort's Catalogue of the Collections of Charles I*, Walpole Society, 37 (London, 1960) pp. 69, 225, records that this portrait was secured in Germany by Sir Henry Vance and given to Charles I; the portrait is not named but is described. Idem., *Tudor . . . Pictures*, p. 59, no. 29, outlines the documents relating to this portrait's entry into the Royal Collection. Chamberlain, p. 14, suggests that the portrait may have possibly been recorded in the duke of Buckingham's collection, cited from Randall Davies, "Inventory of the Duke of

friendship and association with Hans of Antwerp that the artist obtained additional commissions in England.) Unlike the other Steelyard portraits, the sitter is painted in a state of detached contemplation, the embodiment of Erasmus's *vita solitaria*.³⁶

The portrait of the Cologne merchant Hermann Wedigh dated 1532 (Figure 4) probably directly preceded that of the following year of a Member of the Wedigh Family (Figure 6). Identification of the earlier sitter is based both on the design of his armorial family ring and on the inscription on the fore-edge of the book in the lower left corner: HER [W within a shield] WID, an abbreviation of his name. The coat of arms, a chevron surrounded by three willow leaves, was granted by the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian to a "Rheinlander" called Heinrich von Wedig (1440–1513), on July 18, 1503.³⁷ Hermann Wedigh, the third of that name and a great-grandson of Heinrich von Wedig, married Sophia Hörners and fathered eight children, the first of whom was born in 1539.³⁸ At the end of a letter to the Cologne Assembly, dated November 12, 1553, concerning three Cologne ambassadors who remained in London to mediate the reform of the Steelyard, greetings are sent to Hermann Wedigh.³⁹ On October 11, 1554, it is further recorded that Hermann Wedigh and Dietrich Hörner[s], his brother-in-law, were requested to make an interest payment of 20 thalers to the London Steelyard on a loan of 400 thalers.⁴⁰ By 1557 Wedigh was judge of Niederich, and he was also alderman of the Cologne Assembly at the time of his death on December 28, 1560.⁴¹

The device separating HER and WID on the fore-edge of the book (Appendix 15, Figure 16) most

probably stands for the name of Wedigh, but a W within just such a shield was also the symbol of the Windeck, a professional and political organization for members of the Cologne Merchant (Kaufleute) Guild, which elected representatives to the Cologne Assembly.⁴² That the letter W occurs in a seal in the Hans of Antwerp portrait, where it is unrelated to the initials of the sitter, suggests that a professional connection may have been intended in both paintings. Between the pages of Wedigh's book is a slip of paper with a Latin inscription from Terence's *Andria*, line 68, which translates as "Truth breeds hatred" (Appendix 16); the words were taken up by Cicero, who in chapter 24 of his *De amicitia* reasons that, contrary to Terence's statement, the bearer of truth should not be hated but admired and valued in friendship. Holbein's reference to truth may be the painter's comment on the exact likeness of the sitter captured on panel. The meaning of the quotation in this context, however, has not as yet been satisfactorily explained.⁴³

Holbein's portrait of Hermann Wedigh seems almost certainly to have influenced a portrait by the Cologne painter Barthel Bruyn, *A Young Man* of 1539 (Figure 5).⁴⁴ The position of the hand and arms, and the treatment of the silk sleeve, the ring, and the leather gloves are almost identical, though Bruyn's portrait differs in size, format, and in the color of the background. Bruyn apparently borrowed from Holbein the Latin inscription giving the date and the age of the sitter, a device he had not previously employed.⁴⁵ Thus, the portrait of Hermann Wedigh must have been in Cologne by 1539, presumably in the possession of the Wedigh family.

Another member of the Wedigh family, identified

Buckingham's Pictures in 1635," *Burlington Magazine* 10 (1907) pp. 376–382. Van der Doort's description best corresponds to the portrait of Hans of Antwerp, but its presence in Germany seems open to question.

36. William S. Heckscher, "Reflections on Seeing Holbein's Portrait of Erasmus at Longford Castle," *Essays in the History of Art Presented to Rudolf Wittkower*, eds. Douglas Fraser, Howard Hibbard, and Milton J. Levine (London, 1967) p. 129.

37. Siebmacher, *Siebmacher's . . . Wappenbuch*, V, pt. 4, p. 46 and pl. 55; Geelen, pp. 173, 176.

38. Geelen, pp. 178–180, 194; Cologne Archives, *Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln* [Genealogical Records], vol. 1061, pp. 519–526; Anton Fahne, *Geschichte der Kölnischen, Jülichen und Bergischen Geschlechter in Stammtafeln, Wappen, Siegeln, und Urkunden* (Cologne, 1848) p. 112. The name Hermann Wedigh does not appear in English records.

39. *Kölner Inventar*, p. 61, no. 860.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 73, nos. 1021–1024.

41. Geelen, p. 179.

42. Arnold Stelzmann, *Illustrierte Geschichte der Stadt Köln* (Cologne, 1958) pp. 129, 133–134; Konrad Gatz, *Kauffahrer, Krämer und Handelsherren* (Hanover, 1949) p. 145.

43. "Truth breeds hatred" may be a reference to the religious and political climate of the period, truth in regard to the Reformation, and hatred to the turmoil and dissension that followed. Alfred Woltmann, *Holbein and His Time* (London, 1872) pp. 358–359, suggests that the inscription refers to the book as one of the Protestant texts brought secretly into England. See also Chamberlain, p. 16.

44. Hildegard Krummacher, "Zu Holbeins Bildnissen Rheinischer Stahlhofkaufleute," *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 25 (1963) pp. 186–188.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 187.



FIGURE 4
Holbein, *Hermann Wedigh*, 1532. Tempera and oil on wood, $15\frac{5}{8} \times 12\frac{3}{4}$ in. (42.2×32.4 cm.), incl. $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (1.3 cm.) strip at bottom. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Edward S. Harkness, 1940, 50.135.4

by his armorial ring, was painted by Holbein in 1533 (Figure 6, Appendix 18). The sitter, who may be an undocumented brother or cousin of Hermann Wedigh, is traditionally called “Hermann Hillebrandt Wedigh,” but only his family name and age can be established. Hermann Wedigh’s father, Hermann II, had, so far as we know, no other sons and no brothers, and although his sister Clara, Hermann III’s aunt, married first Philip Aberlinck and then Johannes Hillebrandt, no children are recorded from either marriage. The identification of this member of the family as “Hermann Hillebrandt Wedigh” thus remains open to question.⁴⁶ The two Wedigh por-

traits are related only in size and color,⁴⁷ and the different poses make it unlikely that they were intended as pendants, despite the fact that they were recorded together in the same Vienna collection as early as 1746.⁴⁸

Holbein’s next commission may have been that of Dirk Tybis of Duisburg (Figure 7), whose portrait is dated March 1533 (Appendix 21). The sitter’s identity and location in the Steelyard (Windgoose Alley) are given by inscriptions within the portrait (Appendix 19, 21, Figure 17).⁴⁹ Perhaps both as an invocation for protection and as a convention of correspondence,⁵⁰ the more prominent inscription is headed with the name of Jesus, which, with a Latin cross on either side, may be intended also as a reference to the Trinity.⁵¹ Emphasis is placed on the passage of time: “When I was 33 years old, I, Dirk Tybis at London / had this appearance and marked this portrait with my device / in my own hand . . . / by me Dirk [merchant mark] Tybis from Duisburg” (Appendix 21). The sitter’s merchant mark, in reverse and combined with his initials, is also to be seen on the seal lying on the table.⁵² As in the Gisze portrait, the mark contains a Latin cross within its configuration (Appendix 22).

Another Steelyard commission of 1533 is the portrait of Cyriacus Kale (Figure 8), whose name and

46. Geelen, pp. 182, 194, questions the name and relationship of the sitter, but tentatively places him as a cousin of Hermann Wedigh (III). Fahne, *Geschichte der Kölnischen . . . Urkunden*, p. 112, does not record a son of Clara Wedigh Aberlinck/Hillebrandt, nor is one recorded by the Cologne archives. In the present absence of any documentary evidence of his existence, the name of “Hermann Hillebrandt Wedigh” seems to have been composed of parts borrowed from the main Wedigh family and a collateral branch.

47. Although Holbein may have stayed briefly in Cologne on his journey to London via Antwerp in 1532, and could there have painted Hermann Wedigh, the similarity of the two portraits in size and color suggests that they were both painted in London.

48. W. Bürger, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 1 (1869) p. 16; see also Chamberlain, p. 15.

49. Chamberlain, p. 21, reads “toe Dadr” as London and “wae/ hy yss” as “wi./dgyss” or Windgyss, in reference to a passageway of the Steelyard called Windgoose Alley (ibid., p. 3).

50. Krummacher, “Zu Holbeins,” p. 191.

51. In a conversation (1977), Dr. Köhler of the Berlin Museum suggested this interpretation, based on similar merchant correspondence during this period.

52. Kuhlicke, “Merchant Marks,” p. 64.



FIGURE 5
Barthel Bruyn the Elder (1493–1555), *A Young Man*, 1539. Oil on wood, $14\frac{9}{16} \times 10$ in. (37×25.5 cm.). Brunswick, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum (photo: Museum, B. P. Keiser)

London association are given in the inscriptions of two letters (Appendix 24, 25). His merchant mark, a long arrow with a Latin cross and an X,⁵³ is placed on one of the letters to ensure its delivery (Appendix 24). Although his name is not recorded in the local archives,⁵⁴ it is believed that Cyriacus Kale was a member of the Kales or Kalles of Brunswick, a merchant family which resided at 640 Heinestrasse, and

53. Elmhirst, *Merchant Marks*, p. 9, l. 2, no. 577.

54. Sophie Reidemeister, *Genealogien Braunschweiger Patrizier- und Ratsgeschlechter aus der Zeit der Selbständigkeit der Stadt vor 1671* (Brunswick, 1948) p. 88; See also Herman Riegel, *Beschreibendes und Kritisches Verzeichnis der Gemälde-Sammlung* (Brunswick, 1900) pp. 12–13.



FIGURE 6
Holbein, *A Member of the Wedigh Family*, 1533. Tempera and oil on wood, $15\frac{3}{8} \times 11\frac{13}{16}$ in. (39×30 cm.). West Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz (photo: Gemäldegalerie, Jörg P. Anders)

that he was probably the son of Gerloff Kale (1446–1523), mayor of Brunswick in 1521, and elder brother of Hermann Kale (1516–64). Along with the notation of year and age, there is a German inscription, which translates as “Be patient in all things” (Appendix 23), and which perhaps served as a simple motto or as a reassurance to his family of his eventual return. The portrait may indeed have been sent home to Kale’s family, as it was recorded in the collection of Duke Anton Ulrich as early as 1737, and remains today in the museum of that name in Brunswick.

In the portrait of Derich Born (Figure 9), also painted in 1533, the sitter’s name is inscribed in Latin on the stone parapet in the foreground (Appendix



FIGURE 7
Holbein, *Dirk Tybis*, 1533. Tempera and oil on wood, 18¹³/₁₆ × 13³/₄ in. (47.7 × 34.8 cm.). Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum (photo: Museum)

26). This inscription translates in part: "If you were to add a voice this would be Derich his very self / and you would doubt whether a painter or a parent had produced him." It emphasizes that the sitter is alive and, at the same time, provides Holbein with the opportunity to draw attention to the lifelike quality of

55. Floyd Swink independently identified the plant in 1977, but noted that the tendrils seem to be an elaboration on the part of the artist. The fig tree has been associated with the cult of St. Sebastian, protector of the sick, e.g., Andrea Mantegna's *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian* of 1480 (Louvre), and most importantly in Hans Holbein the Elder's *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian* of 1515 (Alte Pinakothek); and with other saints committed to the healing of



FIGURE 8
Holbein, *Cyriacus Kale*, 1533. Tempera and oil on wood, 23⁹/₁₆ × 17³/₈ in. (59.8 × 44.1 cm.). Brunswick, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum (photo: Museum, B. P. Keiser)

his work. A further reference to the sitter's vitality, in contrast to the menace of death, is perhaps seen in the vinelike fig prominent in the background, a plant traditionally associated with protection against disease.⁵⁵ The *Hortus Sanitatis* of 1485 records that boiled figs are good against pestilence and epilepsy,⁵⁶

the sick, e.g., *St. Cyriacus* (Städel) and *St. Elizabeth of Thüringen* (Donaueschingen), Matthias Grünewald's side panels (1509) for Albrecht Dürer's Heller Altar. See also Markow, "Holbein's Steelyard Portraits," p. 45; Lottlisa Behling, *Matthias Grünewald* (Freiburg, 1969) pp. 10–14, 33–35.

56. Johann Wonnecke Cube, *Hortus Sanitatis* (Mainz: Peter Schöffer, 1485; reprint, Munich, 1966) s.v. *Ficus*.

FIGURE 9

Holbein, *Derich Born*, 1533. Tempera and oil on wood, $23\frac{3}{4} \times 17\frac{3}{8}$ (60.3 \times 45.1 cm.). Windsor, The Royal Collection (reproduced by kind permission of H. M. the Queen, crown copyright reserved)

and the fig branch, perhaps symbolizing protection against disease, appears in earlier portraits and other works by Holbein.⁵⁷ In the same year, Holbein referred to the transience of life and the instability of fortune in a pair of allegories called *The Triumph of Riches* and *The Triumph of Poverty*, painted for the Steelyard guildhall, and now known only from a drawing by Holbein and from copies. A Latin inscription in a copy of *The Triumph of Poverty* contains the reflection: "He who is rich . . . fears hourly that the inconstant wheel of fortune may turn," verses often attributed to Sir Thomas More.

Of all Holbein's Steelyard merchants, Derich Born of Cologne is the most extensively documented. On October 6, 1533, Johannes Born, the sitter's elder brother, sent goods from Lübeck on a ship registered in Antwerp and bound for England, most probably to his brother Derich,⁵⁸ who, as "Dyryck Borne, merchant of the Steelyard," is recorded in the *State Papers* in 1536 as having received payment "for various bundles of harness."⁵⁹ As further recorded in the Cologne archives, between August 13, 1540 and February 12, 1543, the Born brothers, along with Derick Berck (see Figure 10), had bought £600 of lead from the duke of Suffolk, but had failed to fulfill payment and were threatened with a fine by Sir Thomas Cromwell.⁶⁰ In retaliation, on January 30, 1541, the duke of Suffolk confiscated a ship full of cloth which belonged to the Born brothers.⁶¹ Because they endangered the privileges of all merchants in England from Cologne, that city intervened on May 20, 1541, and



the Born brothers were expelled from the London Steelyard.⁶² By December 9, 1542, they were reported to be in Antwerp.⁶³ There in the following year, according to the Antwerp archives, between November 6 and November 11, Derich Born was petitioned for payment of bills by a notary representing merchants Jacob van Maesevick and Jan van Caster.⁶⁴

57. *The Last Supper* (1520), *Darmstadt (Meyer) Madonna* (1526–30), *Lady with a Squirrel* (1526–28), *Sir Henry Guildford* (1527), *Lady Guildford* (1527), *William Reskimer* (1532), most probably *Bonifacius Amerbach* (1519), and, attributed to Holbein the Elder as well as the Younger, *St. Ursula* (1523). Open to question is the possible identification of the tree as fig in Holbein the Younger's 1533 allegories, *The Triumph of Riches* and *The Triumph of Poverty* (Chamberlain, pp. 23–30; Ganz, *Paintings of Hans Holbein*, pp. 284–288, nos. 177, 178, ill. 57–59; R. Salvini and H. W. Grohn, *Holbein il Giovane* [Milan, 1971] p. 100, nos. 71A, 71B, ill. 71A, 71A', 71B).

58. *Kölner Inventar*, p. 3, no. 28.

59. Chamberlain, p. 19, cites *State Papers*, XI, no. 686.

60. Paul Wescher, *Grosskaufleute der Renaissance* (Basel, 1940) p. 150; *Kölner Inventar*, pp. 15–18, 20, nos. 199, 214, 218, 233, 237, 239, and 268. Derick Berck's name appears in the record of February 12, 1543, p. 20, no. 268.

61. *Kölner Inventar*, p. 16, no. 214, recorded on February 11, 1541.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 17, no. 218, and p. 18, no. 239.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 20, no. 260.

64. Jacob Strieder, *Aus Antwerpener Notariatsarchiven* (Berlin, 1930) pp. 153–155, no. 215.

In response to this suit, Born repeatedly claimed that he had no money to fulfill payment.⁶⁵ By 1549, he had sent goods from Antwerp to England insured for £550.⁶⁶ On November 17, 1550, an “English Priest of Canterbury” tried through Jan Lens of Antwerp to recover the sum of £32, which had been borrowed by Born.⁶⁷ The last record concerning Derich Born in the Cologne archives is dated July 11, 1549, when he made a formal complaint to the Steelyard about his earlier expulsion.⁶⁸ Since Holbein’s portrait of Born is thought to have entered the Royal Collection early in the seventeenth century,⁶⁹ it may have remained in England after he and his brother were expelled.

The last of the Steelyard commissions is the portrait of Derick Berck of Cologne, painted in 1536 (Figure 10). The sitter’s identity, age, and association with the Steelyard are recorded in the portrait (Appendix 27, 28). Although Berck is thought to have been born in the city of Duisburg, fifty miles north of Cologne, and lived on “Oberstrasse,”⁷⁰ he may in fact have become a citizen of Cologne, since he is referred to as from Cologne in that city’s archives. On February 12, 1543, the city of Cologne, in response to earlier correspondence from King Henry VIII, indicated that the matter involving the duke of Suffolk and “Kolner in England”—specifically the Born brothers and Derick Berck—had been correctly handled.⁷¹ On December 31, 1545, Derick Berck of Cologne sought to rent a room in the London Steelyard, previously rented to Joachim Gevertz of Hamburg for £7,⁷² which suggests that Berck had not been expelled from the Steelyard with the Borns.

Within the letter identifying the sitter is Derick Berck’s merchant mark⁷³ and a German inscription traditionally translated as “Consider the end” (Appendix 27, Figure 18). This statement, unlikely to be

Berck’s personal motto, was perhaps borrowed by Holbein from his former friend and patron Erasmus of Rotterdam, whose personal motto, written in Greek, was “Contemplate the end of a long life,” and who regarded such Greek or Latin inscriptions as verses pronounced by Death himself.⁷⁴ A Latin inscription, facing the viewer, was taken from Virgil’s *Aeneid*, book I, line 203: “Someday it will be pleasant to remember” (Appendix 29, Figure 18). In the *Aeneid*, this famous quotation was intended as a statement of encouragement, as greater misfortunes still awaited Aeneas and his comrades before reaching their new home. Berck may have wished to be remembered with pleasure after death, or he may have intended to suggest that he would recall with pleasure his days in the London Steelyard only after his safe return to Germany. If Berck’s portrait was in fact sent back to his family, this quotation could have been a message of encouragement against his eventual homecoming.

The year of the Berck portrait, 1536, was also the year of Holbein’s official appointment as painter to the court of Henry VIII.⁷⁵ Thereafter, he devoted most of his time to royal commissions. The Steelyard Merchants, as private citizens trading overseas in what was for them a foreign country, are necessarily more obscure. But the care with which Holbein recorded information about them in their portraits, taken with the surviving documents, allows us to glimpse something of their way of life and their personal concerns. The uncertainties of the time, the hardships as well as the fortunes of a merchant’s career, the ever-present menace of the plague in London—from which the artist himself was to die in 1543—all seem to be reflected in these significant and masterly paintings.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid., p. 245, no. 443.

67. Ibid., p. 260, no. 487.

68. *Kölner Inventar*, p. 342.

69. Chamberlain, pp. 19–20; Millar, *Tudor . . . Pictures*, p. 57, no. 26.

70. Günter von Roden, *Geschichte der Stadt Duisburg* (Duisburg, 1970) I, pp. 88, 322.

71. *Kölner Inventar*, p. 20, no. 268; Wescher, *Grosskaufleute*, p. 150, calls the sitter “Dirk Bergh aus Köln.”

72. *Kölner Inventar*, p. 27, no. 362.

73. Elmhirst, *Merchant Marks*, p. 9, l. 11, no. 98.

74. Erwin Panofsky, “Erasmus and the Visual Arts,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 32 (1969) p. 216.

75. Holbein was commissioned by the Steelyard to design a triumphal arch as its contribution to the coronation pageant of Anne Boleyn on May 31, 1533. His drawing of the project survives (Berlin). Chamberlain, pp. 30–33, and Colvin, *Germans in England*, pp. 151–152, discuss the supposedly intentional insult directed toward the new queen in this project.

FIGURE 10
Holbein, *Derick Berck*, 1536.
Tempera and oil on canvas,
transferred from wood,
21 × 16¾ in. (53.3 × 42.6 cm.).
The Metropolitan Museum of
Art, The Jules Bache Collec-
tion, 49.7.29



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Appendix

INSCRIPTIONS AND MERCHANT MARKS IN HOLBEIN'S PORTRAITS OF THE STEELYARD MERCHANTS

Georg Gisze (Figures 1, 11–15)

1. *Top*

Διονυχιὸν ἰ Ἰμαγινῆ Georgiī Gyseniī
Ista, refert vultus, quā cernis, Imago Georgi
Sic oculos viuos, sic habet ille genas
Anno ætatis suæ xxxiiiiij
Anno dom̃ 1532

The distich on the picture of Georg Gisze
This picture of Georg that you see records his features
Such lively eyes, such cheeks has he
In the year of his age 34
In the year of the Lord 1532

2. *Upper left*

Nulla sine merore voluptas
G. Gisze:—

No joy without sorrow
G. Gisze

3. *Letter in sitter's hands*

Dem Erszamen
Jorgen gisze to lunden
in engelant mynem
broder to handen

To the honorable
Georg Gisze at London
in England my
brother to give

4. *Right, upper letter 1*

Dem Ersamē Jurgen
ghyszin to lund in
engelant kame dyszer
breff

To the honorable Georg
Gisze at London in
England comes this
letter

Inhans
Stolten



in lund anno 1528
7 . . .

Ihñs

In Hans
Stolten

[*merchant mark*]

in London in the year 1528
7 [*month illegible*]

[?Johannes or In Hans]

FIGURES 11–15

Holbein, *Georg Gysze*, details of inscriptions (photos: Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Jörg P. Anders)

FIGURE 11 (Appendix 1)



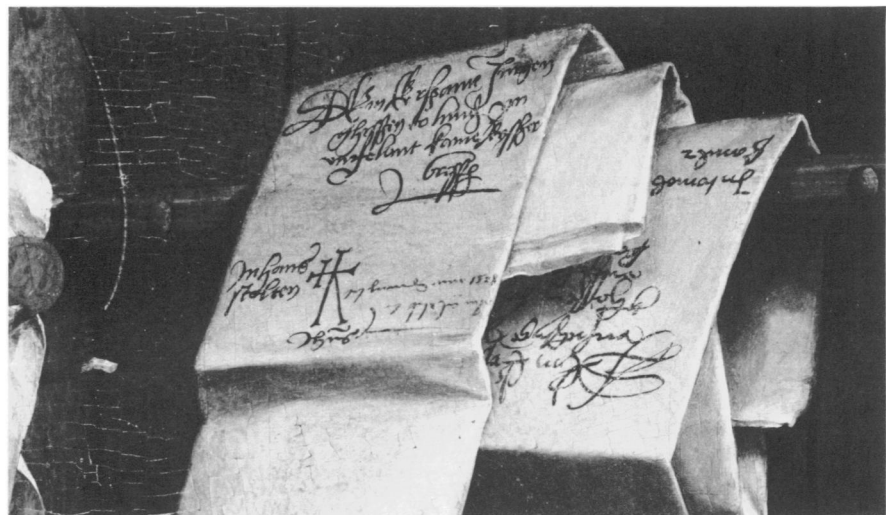
FIGURE 12 (Appendix 2)



FIGURE 13 (Appendix 3)



FIGURE 14 (Appendix 4, 5)



5. *Right, upper letter 2 (inscription upside down)*

DEm Ers[amen]
vorsichtige J[urgen]
ghyszen to l[unden]
engel
K[ome]

In tomas
Bandz

To the honorable
prudent Georg
Gisze at London
England
[comes this letter]

In Thomas
Bandz

6. *Right, lower letter 1*

DEm Erszamen
vorsichtigē Jurgē gyssze
to lund in engelant
kome dysszer breff

In Jurge ...
zuBasel 1531



To the honorable
prudent Georg Gisze
at London in England
comes this letter

In Georg ...
of Basel 1531

[merchant mark]

7. *Right, lower letter 2*

... nder[?]
gysszē
... nt

in lund, anno 1531
17 [...] may



...
Gisze
...[Engla]nd

in London, in the year 1531
17 [...] of May

[lower half of Gisze's merchant mark]

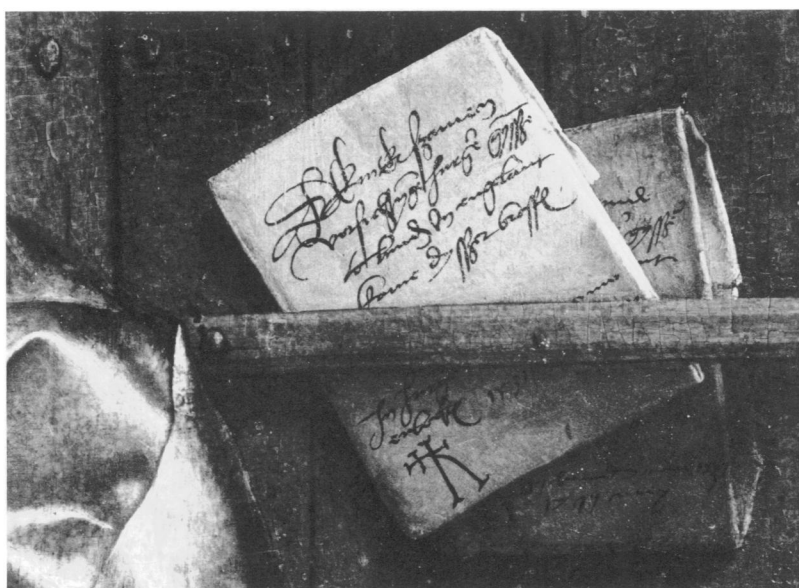


FIGURE 15
(Appendix 6, 7)

8. *Right, suspended string container*

EN HEER EN

[?derived from Herren]

9. *Folded letter, left of scale, illegible*

10. *Seal*



[merchant mark reversed within a shield]

Hans of Antwerp (Figure 3)

11. *Letter in sitter's hands*

Dem Ersamen H
...An. .werpen
Stallhof zu

[Below to the left, unknown markings]

To the honorable H[ans of]
An[t]werp
[at the] Steelyard to [give]

[The legibility of the inscription is open to question, but the
sitter's identity has been universally accepted.]

12. *Paper on table*

Anno Dns 1532 auf 26 July
Aetatis suae 33[?]

In the year of the Lord 1532 on 26 July
at the age of 33[?]

13. *Seal*

W

W

Hermann Wedigh (Figures 4, 16)

14. *Background inscription*

ANNO . 1532. ÆTATIS . SVÆ . 29.

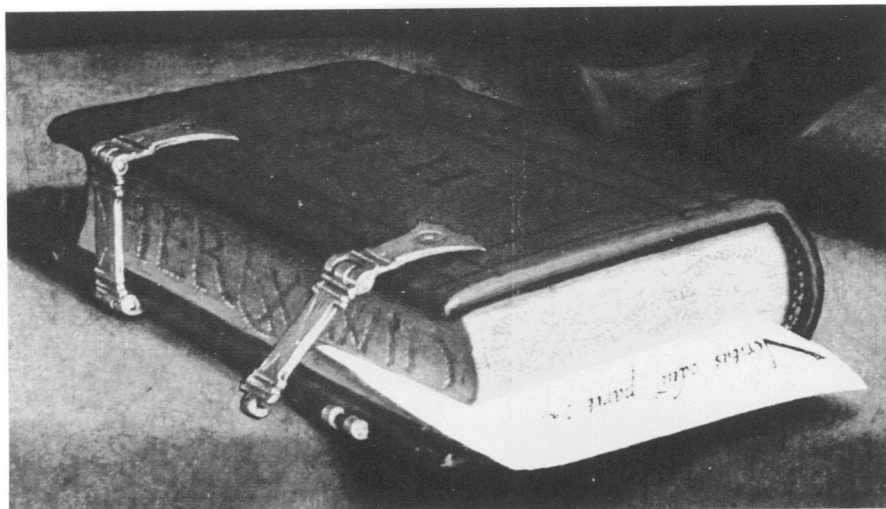
In the year 1532 at the age of 29

15. *Fore-edge of book*

HER [W within a shield] WID

HER[MANN] W WID[IG]

FIGURE 16
(Appendix 15–17)
Holbein, *Hermann We-*
digh, detail of inscrip-
tions



16. *Loose sheet in book*

Veritas odiū[m] parit:—

Truth breeds hatred

17. *Cover of book*

· H · H ·

H[ans] H[olbein]

A Member of the Wedigh Family (Figure 6)

18. *Background inscription*

ANNO 1533 ÆTATIS . SVÆ 39

In the year 1533 at the age of 39

Dirk Tybis (Figures 7, 17)

19. *Letter in sitter's hands*

Dem ersamen Deryck
Tybys van Duysborch
alwyl toe Dadr [Londn?] off wae
hy yss myn lyffen bro
der ff.

To the honorable Dirk
Tybis of Duisburg
... [at London] of Wi
ndgoose my dear bro
ther. . .

[See note 49]

20. *Letter in foreground illegible*

21. *Paper at left*

† Jesus †
Da ick was 33 jar was ick Deryck Tybis to London
dyser gestalt en hab dyser gelicken den mael
ges[shrieben]
myt myner eigener hant en was halffs mert anno
1533
per my Deryck Tybis fan Dus



† Jesus †
When I was 33 years old, I, Dirk Tybis at London
had this appearance and marked this portrait with
my device
in my own hand and it was the middle of March in
the year 1533
by me Dirk [merchant mark] Tybis from Du[i]s[burg]

22. *Seal*



[merchant mark reversed]

FIGURE 17 (Appendix 19–22)
Holbein, *Dirk Tybis*, detail of inscriptions (photo:
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum)

Cyriacus Kale (Figure 8)

23. Background inscription

IN ALS GEDOLTIG
ANNO

SIS ALTERS · 32
· 1533 ·

Be patient in all things
In the year

His age 32
1533

24. Letter 1 in sitter's hands

Dem Ersame Syryacuss
Kalen in lu[n]den up Stalhoff
sy disse br[e]ff



In hys

d[a]

To the honorable Cyriacus
Kale in London of the Steelyard
. . . this letter

[merchant mark]

In his

. . .

25. Letter 2 in sitter's hands

Dem Ersamenn Sylliakes
Kallenn to Lund[en]
stalhoff by duch
ang

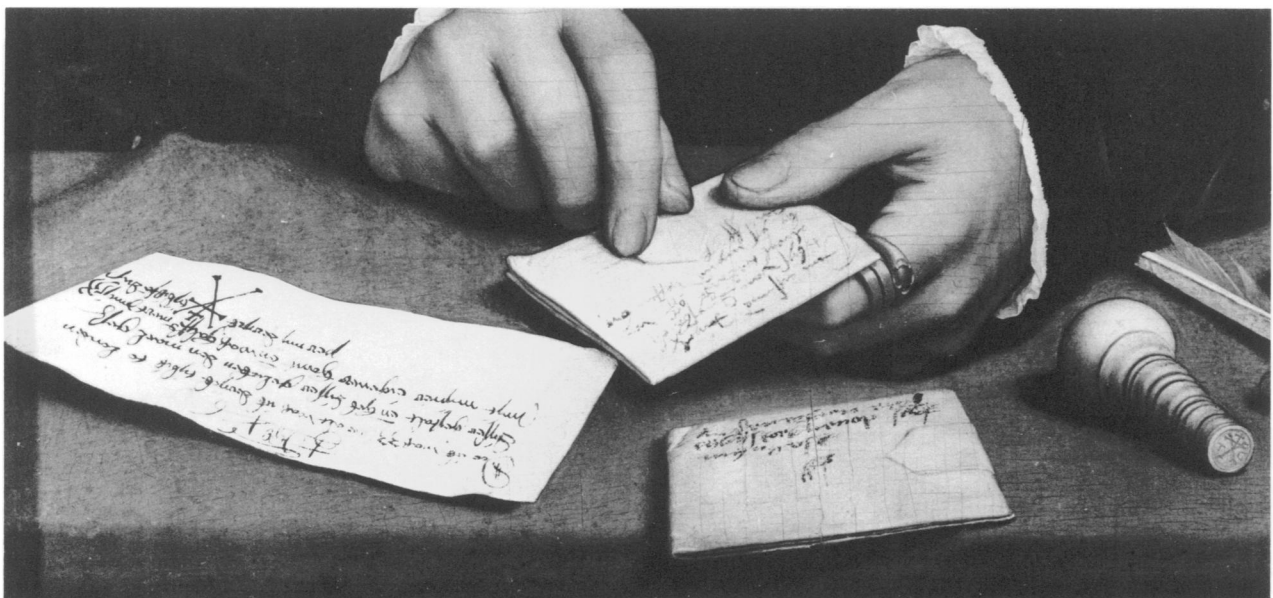
To the honorable Cyriacus
Kale at Lond[on]
the Steelyard. . .
Eng[land]

Derich Born (Figure 9)

26. Parapet inscription

DERICHVS SI VOCEM ADDAS IPSISSIMVS HIC SIT
HVNC DVBITES PICTOR FECERIT AN GENITOR
DER BORN ETATIS SVÆ · 23 · ANNO 1533

If you were to add a voice this would be Derich his
very self
and you would doubt whether a painter or a
parent had produced him
Der[ich] Born at the age of 23 in the year 1533

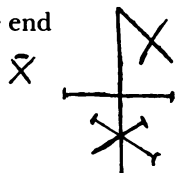


Derick Berck (Figures 10, 18)

27. Letter in sitter's hands

Dem Ersamen und
fromen[?] Derick Berck
lvnden vpt Staelhoff [8?]

besad de end



To the honorable and
pious[?] Derick Berck
London. . . Steelyard [8?]

Consider the end

*[This is the traditional reading of the German, which is
probably still valid, despite some lack of clarity.]*

[merchant mark]

28. Table surface, right

AN 1536 ÆTA: 30 ·

In the year 1536 age 30

29. Paper at left

Olim meminisse iuvabit

Someday it will be pleasant to remember

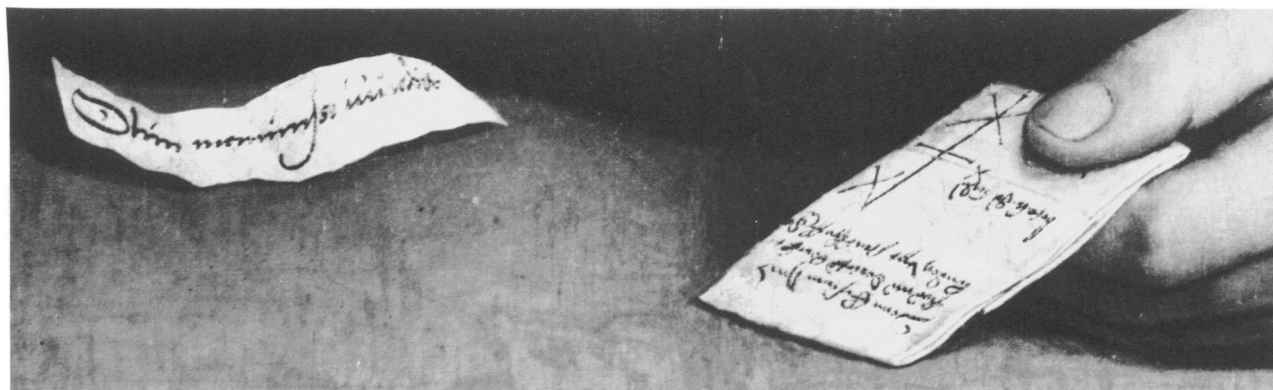


FIGURE 18 (Appendix 27, 29)
Holbein, *Derick Berck*, detail of inscriptions