PART I

Self-Presentation and Self-Promotion

CHAPTER 1

Show-Offs
Women's Self-Portrait Prints c. 1700

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The self-portrait empowered early modern women artists to deliver distinctive statements about their creative identities.[1] Barred until the early nineteenth century from live-model drawing within the context of their academic training, women found other outlets for studying the body, regularly focusing their attention on figures to which they could devote close and unfettered observation, which is to say friends, family and self.[2] Focused on paintings and drawings, however, studies of the topic have largely omitted prints, neglecting to contemplate how consideration of this medium might nuance our understanding of women's contribution to the genre. From the time print workshops were established in the sixteenth century, women were regularly tasked with the reproduction of historical and allegorical subjects their male peers had invented, including narratives that featured the nude, the study of which the academy had long banned them. Conversely, even as male artists from the late fifteenth century

[1] Well-known works by Sofonisba Anguissola, Lavinia Fontana, Elisabetta Sirani, and others who take themselves as subjects for their own art lend substance to this argument. See, for example, M. D. Garrard, 'Here's Looking at Me: Sofonisba and the Problem of the Woman Artist', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 47 (1994): 556–622; S. Ffolliott, 'Early Modern Women Artists', in A. M. Poska , J. Couchman, and K. A. McIver, eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2013), 429; F. Borzello, *Seeing Ourselves: Women's Self-Portraits* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 17–101; C. King, 'Looking a Sight: Sixteenth-Century Portraits of Woman Artists', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 58:3 (1995): 381–406; and B. Bohn, 'Female Self-Portraiture in Early Modern Bologna', *Renaissance Studies*, 18:2 (2004): 239–86.

[2] The locus classicus for the argument that the careers of women artists suffered as a result of the academy's prohibition on their study of the live model is the ground-breaking article by L. Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?' in V. Gornick and B. Morgan, eds., *Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness* (New York: Basic, 1971), 480–510. For evidence that Nochlin's thesis, which has long held sway, deserves to be reexamined, see P. A. Spies-Gans, 'Why Do We Think There Have Been No Great Women Artists? Revisiting Linda Nochlin and the Archive', *Art Bulletin*, 104:2 (2022): 74–81. For Sofonisba's reliance on members of her family as subjects for her art, see M. W. Cole, *Sofonisba's Lesson* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), 86–89.

enthusiastically embraced the self-portrait print as a site for broadcasting their distinctiveness as authors and inventors, female artists and creators were notably less eager to incorporate it into their practice.[3] Print travelled far and wide, enabling men who etched or engraved their self-portraits to flaunt their accomplishments and fulfil their aspirations of undying fame. Women's reliance on the same techniques for self-advancement was substantially more troubled, however. By showing themselves off, by literally exposing themselves to the public eye, they risked not covering themselves in glory but – like the widely shared medium in which the images were created – inviting comparison of themselves with the common street-walker.[4] These and other circumstances suggest that a rather different set of criteria was at stake when it came to how women approached making prints and especially what they understood to be suitable themes for their involvement with them. This chapter examines several self-portrait prints from the eighteenth century to explore some of the concerns that went into how women shaped their appearances with the knowledge that, by making themselves subjects for everyone to see and potentially own, they were walking a fine line between establishing their prominence and committing a potentially perilous offence for which they would be judged, often in terms that assailed their virtue and/or questioned their beauty. Loath to attract this sort of attention, eighteenth-century women, this chapter finds, either avoided using the medium for self-portrayal altogether or leaned heavily on male authority figures and veiled allusion to account for and justify their representations.

Two etchings by Maria de Wilde (1682–1729) from the very beginning of the eighteenth century bring this discussion into focus, pointing to the challenges female creators would face for the next 100 years and beyond. Without precedent – apart from etchings by Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678) – the works illustrate the care de Wilde put into crafting her image, mindful that the choice not just to pick up the etching needle but also to make herself the topic of print were hazardous undertakings. Riding on the reputation and social status of her father, Jacob de Wilde

[3] For early modern portrait prints, including self-portraits, largely by men, see V. S. Lobis, *Van Dyck, Rembrandt and the Portrait Print* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016) and C. Harris, *Portraiture in Prints* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1987).

[4] For a discussion of the connections between public speech/print and harlotry, see E. Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers in the Renaissance* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1987) and A. R. Jones, *The Currency of Eros: Women's Love Lyric in Europe, 1540–1620* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990).

Figure 1.1 Maria de Wilde, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1700. Etching, 20.8 × 14.6 cm. Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-1910-1860.

(1645–1721), a high-ranking officer in the Amsterdam Admiralty, Maria de Wilde represents these acts as expressions not of fierce independence but of filial piety. In the first of these self-portraits (Figure 1.1), likely created around 1700 and possibly just shortly before the second, she renders herself bust-length, bordered by a fictive oval frame below which the words 'Maria de Wilde Jacobi Filia' [Maria de Wilde, daughter of Jacob] are prominently inscribed. The decision to include these words may in part have been motivated by the ways in which sixteenth- and seventeenth-century women printmakers signed their works. Many women in the early modern period acquired proficiency in the medium under the tutelage of their husbands, fathers, and other male relations in order that they might contribute to the activities of running the family

workshop.[5] Such is the case, for example, with Barbara van den Broeck (born c. 1558/60), daughter of Crispin van den Broeck, and Susanna Maria von Sandrart (1658–1716), daughter of Jacob von Sandrart, who both signed a number of their works referring to themselves as 'filia', daughters of their prominent printmaker fathers. Unlike these, however, de Wilde was not the progeny of a well-known male engraver, and her images did not therefore function as advertisements for the products of a familial publishing enterprise. Instead, de Wilde was an amateur, a circumstance she spells out with a second Latin inscription, 'amatrix artium', or female lover of arts. Her etching thus belongs to a large body of work produced in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by women who belonged to the moneyed, intellectual and leisure classes, many of whom dabbled in producing prints, primarily etchings.[6] Unconstrained by the pressures of working as an artist to make a living, amateurs like de Wilde had greater freedom to experiment and to overcome possible blunders. It can be no accident that the first full-page self-portrait prints were created not by established female painters or printmakers but by non-professionals, including what is very likely the first one of its kind executed by fellow countrywoman Anna Maria van Schurman, an accomplished scholar who made art on the side.[7] This circumstance, notwithstanding, de Wilde's allusion to being the 'filia' of Jacob communicates her sense of the need to account for her practice through reference to him.

What were some of the pitfalls for women of circulating their likenesses in print? To examine the question, it is helpful to return to the example of Anna Maria van Schurman, who in 1633 at age 26 produced a bust-length etching of herself (Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-59.344), an image that sets out to navigate the highly gendered divisions between the public (male) and private (female) spheres that were a condition for working in the medium of print from the sixteenth century through the period this volume encompasses.[8] Modestly clothed, van

[5] E. A. Honig, 'The Art of Being "Artistic": Dutch Women's Creative Practices in the 17th Century', *Woman's Art Journal*, 22:2 (2001): 31–32; J. Brodsky, 'Some Notes on Women Printmakers', *Art Journal*, 35:4 (1976): 374–377.

[6] For more on the amateur, see C. Guichard, '*Amateurs* and the Culture of Etching', in *Artists and Amateurs: Etchings in 18th-Century France*, pub. in conjunction with Metropolitan Museum of Art (dist. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 137–138.

[7] M. M. Peacock, *Heroines, Harpies and Housewives* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 115–137. For more on Schurman's engravings on glass, see M. van Elk, 'Female Glass Engravers in the Early Modern Dutch Republic', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 73 (2020): 165–211.

[8] Juan Vives, in *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, stated: 'It neither becommeth a woman . . . to live among men, or speake abroade. . . it were better to be at home within and unknowen to other

Schurman arranged her appearance to avoid impropriety, hoping no doubt that this would permit her etching to enter into circulation without causing too much of a stir. She wears her chin length, tightly curled hair loose and is clothed in a heavily brocaded dress with a lace neckline that covers her décolleté and fastens firmly and chastely under the chin. In front of her, she had placed a large cartouche resembling a fictive scroll that partially obscures her torso from view. Made of a substance that is sizably thicker than paper, a solid, possibly stone-like material, the frame functions as a sort of impenetrable buttress or shield between van Schurman and the viewer, giving physical form to her need to find shelter, conscious that even as she attempts to take cover behind it, she was baring herself to a level of scrutiny that was incompatible with contemporary notions of comportment becoming to a woman.[9]

The following words appear on the cartouche: 'Neither my mind's arrogance, nor my physical beauty/Has urged me to engrave my portrait in ever-lasting bronze./ It was, rather, the impulse to not work on more powerful subjects on my first attempt,/ If perhaps this crude stylus (my novice as an artist) were forbidding better ones'.[10] Signalling her unwillingness to describe herself in overly complimentary terms, the inscription – in keeping with ideas of womanly humility and the sentiments commonly expressed by amateurs about their lack of expertise – reflects van Schurman's renunciation to claims either of beauty or skill, a statement that might lead one to conclude that she held little of her own handiwork. Shortly after etching the work, however, she gifted it to the leading Dutch intellectual Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687), likely in a bid to engage his interest in her scholarship. Taking the form of a poem, his intensely personal response offers insights into how van Schurman's printmaking venture was received by a leading male intellectual of her time. Written on 2 December 1634, Huygens's verse reads:

folks', quoted by W. Wall, 'Isabella Whitney and the Female Legacy', *ELH,* 53 (1991): 35. See also J. Weintraub, 'The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction', in J. Weintraub and K. Kumar, eds., *Public and Private in Thought and Practice* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 1–39, and M. van Elk, *Early Modern Women's Writing: Domesticity, Privacy and the Public Sphere in England and the Dutch Republic* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 167–213.

[9] A. A. Sneller, '"If she had been a man. . ." Anna Maria van Schurman in the Social and Literary Life of Her Age', in M. de Baar, ed., *Choosing the Better Part* (Alphen aan den Rijn: Kluwer, 1996), 134: 'He [Constantijn] saw the cartouche as a shield for this woman who apparently wanted to live and die a virgin.' Schurman's cartouche bears comparison with the roundel Sofonisba included in her well-known self-portrait, which has been described as a 'shield'. See Cole, *Sofonisba's Lesson*, 39.

[10] The translation of the original Dutch inscription is taken from M. M. Peacock, 'Mirrors of Skill and Renown: Women and Self-Fashioning in Early-Modern Dutch Art', *Mediaevistik*, 28 (2015): 329.

Why does the maid conceal those hands
Which never found their equal?
The copper turned this way and that
Has made her fingers black
And she is ashamed to show them thus
Reader, let us exonerate her from blame
'Tis the fault of the first cut,
That she ever made in all her days.[11]

An ekphrasis of the picture, Huygens speculates why van Schurman's etching failed to include her hands that have been sullied by ink. Slyly honing in on her desire to make herself the subject of a print as an initiative that transgressed the boundaries of feminine (read private or non-public) behaviour, Huygens identifies her role in authoring the image as a sort of crime, wilfully ignoring in the process van Schurman's best efforts to present herself with appropriate reserve. His poem instead aims to 'out' her by imagining that her project to make prints, like some original sin, has indelibly stained her hands and that she has inserted the cartouche in an effort not to thwart access to her body, but to conceal the evidence of her guilt. To make matters worse, he uses a sexual metaphor, 'the first cut', to describe her decision to pick up the stylus to score the plate, describing the act as a self-inflicted hurt that can never be undone. Van Schurman may be a virgin, but for Huygens her choice to incise her own image has forever spoiled her maidenhood: the girl is now a slut.[12]

Portrait paintings, drawings, miniatures and medals have long participated in elaborate rituals of gift-giving and receiving with the aim of currying favour and cementing renown.[13] Van Schurman's reliance on these very habits of exchange and her decision to present Huygens with a print is indicative of her understanding of the role the medium could play in managing her public persona, as it had done for men from the time a means to create repeatable images was invented. Remarks by Crispin de Passe in his *Les Vrais Pourtraits*

[11] The English translation is from de Baar, *Choosing the Better Part*, 22. For more on the poetry written to van Schurman by Constantijn, see K. van der Stighelen and J. de Landtsheer, 'Een suer-soete Maeghd voor Constantijn Huygens Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678), *De Zeventiende Eeuw: Cultuur in de Nederlanden*, 25:2 (2009): 149–202. The text provides translations into Dutch from the original Latin poems.

[12] C. Pal, *Republic of Women: Rethinking the Republic of Letters in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 207: 'For van Schurman, her status as "the virgin of Utrecht" made her unmarried state part of her scholarly identity from the beginning.' See also van Elk, *Early Modern Women's Writing*, 176–177.

[13] For more on this tradition, see among many others L. Silver, 'The Face is Familiar: German Renaissance Portrait Multiples in Prints and Medals', *Word and Image,* 19:1 (2003): 6–21; and T. A. Sowerbery, 'A Memorial and a Pledge of Faith': Portraiture and Early Modern Diplomatic Culture', *The English Historical Review*, 129 (2014): 296–331.

De quelques unes des Plus Grandes Dames de la Chrestiente, desguisées en Bergères (*The True Portraits of several of the Greatest Women of Christianity, disguised as Shepherdesses*) of 1640, might have given her reason to reconsider the suitability of her choice of gift, however, especially the act of bestowing the etching on a man. By imbuing his female subjects – well-known ladies from the aristocracy and upper middle class – with pseudonyms and presenting them in pastorally inspired costumes, de Passe says he aimed to disguise the women's identities in order to deter men from declaring that they had the portraits of their 'beloveds' in their pockets.[14] A sartorial invention of the seventeenth century, the *pochettes* into which de Passe imagines these pictures would be slipped, communicates how prints lent themselves to being carried upon and even close to the body.[15] When van Schurman gave Huygens her etched self-portrait on paper, a thing that by its nature is tactile and designed to be touched, fondled, even pocketed, she also unwittingly handed him the means not just to regard but even to handle her in ways that we now see provided occasion to imagine her in disturbingly intimate terms. One can well imagine de Wilde's hopes to be sheltered from this sort of consideration when she referred to her kinship with Jacob. By conspicuously describing herself as 'Jacobi filia' she effectively inserted her father between herself and the male beholder, making it much more challenging for the user to treat her image in ways indicated by Huygens and de Passe.

Relying on conventions introduced to portraiture by Anthony van Dyck, de Wilde portrays herself against a swag of drapery and a sliver of landscape with the columns of a classical façade beyond. With bare décolleté and soft curls piled high on top of her head and tumbling over her shoulders, her modish, upper-class self-presentation is strikingly different from that of van Schurman. A series of stray etching marks in the margin of the frame and non-referential letters next to her inscription suggest that she conceived the etching as a trial proof and that the work was never intended for widespread circulation, a circumstance that may explain her somewhat voluptuous portrayal. Like van Schurman, however, de Wilde concentrates on her upper torso, omitting her arms and hands. With this in mind, it is striking that a pair of hands appears among the doodles that occupy the bottom of the sheet. Eerily disembodied, they hang suspended in mid-air just beneath the words 'amatrix artium', suggesting a possible link between them and her status as an amateur.

[14] The extract reads in the introduction addressed to the 'nymphs of the [River] Amstel': '. . . que meme les jeunes hommes ne se peuvent venter de porter les portraits de leur bien-aymées dans leur pochettes'.

[15] B. Burman and A. Fennetaux, *The Pocket: A Hidden History of Women's Lives, 1660–1900* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020), 25–27.

The one on the left with index and middle finger gently curled inward seems poised to hold a small delicate instrument, while the one on the right with all digits pointing towards the palm seems ready to grip or hold something larger and more substantial. Even though it is impossible to state with any certainty what the artist had in mind, the gestures are not incompatible with those of a hand holding an etching needle in one and a matrix or tablet in the other. If this is the case, then the artist, while omitting these details from her self-portrait, was pondering not only how to represent her activities as an etcher but also, more importantly, how to render them in a way that would not cause her embarrassment.

This brings us to the second of de Wilde's etchings, one that does show her in the process of working on a plate. A frontispiece to *Signa Antiqua e Museo Jacobi de Wilde* of 1700 (Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles), the print prefaces de Wilde's best-known publication, a set of sixty signed etchings that replicates Egyptian, Roman and Renaissance statuettes in her father's renowned cabinet or 'museo'.[16] By comparison with the former, this one shows her more plainly attired, wearing a dress that covers her chest, and strappy, Roman-style sandals in keeping with her project's antiquarian focus. Seated beneath a sculpture of Apollo, de Wilde renders herself in the act of drawing on a matrix. Occupying an elevated position on a pedestal carved with a Latin inscription referring to de Wilde's role in reproducing her father's collection, Apollo reaches down to hand her a statuette, bestowing on her the gift of art and the theme of her book.[17] To the right an impish looking Mercury similarly seems intent on presenting her with a double-headed Janus bust, with the head of a man on one side and that of a woman on the other. Following in the tradition of earlier professional female printmakers, the image expresses an understanding of printmaking as an activity in which women engaged with appropriate male oversight: de Wilde could reasonably expect her project to meet with approval because she conducted it under the auspices of her father and the paternalistic gaze of the gods. If de Wilde's first self-portrait conveys her anxiety about how to portray the act of producing etchings, her second finds a solution in the patronage of an array of male authority figures.[18]

[16] M. A. Wes, *Classics in Russia 170–1855* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 14–15, and M. A. Francis, *Mixed Forms of Visual Culture: From the Cabinet of Curiosities to Digital Diversity* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 47–48.

[17] The inscription reads: SIGNA ANTIQUA E MUSEO JACOBI DE WILDE PER MARIAM FILIAM AERI INSCRIPTA.

[18] It is noteworthy that male printmaker Pieter van den Berge's (1659–1737) portrait of Maria de Wilde, also included in the *Signa Antiqua* volume (Getty Research Center, Los Angeles), shows no comparable hesitation about including the female artist's hands, suggesting that the issue was one of concern to her (and other female artists), but not to men. Like Maria de Wilde, however, van den

Figure 1.2 Angelika Kauffmann, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1764.[19] Etching, 15.5 × 11.8 cm. Graphic Art Collection, Albertina, Vienna, DG2017/3/1972.

The challenges and consequent hesitancy women felt about portraying themselves in print are epitomized by the skilled and highly successful painter Angelika Kauffmann (1741–1807), an artist who did not otherwise shy away from circulating her inventions in print and who is known for her drawn and painted self-portraits.[20] Scholars ascribe to her an etched self-portrait created around 1764, which survives in what may be a unique impression (Figure 1.2), likely an indication that the edition was small.[21] Modest in scale, it measures just 15.5 × 11.8 cm and shows the sitter

Berge draws attention to the sitter's role in documenting Jacob de Wilde's collection – Maria de Wilde carries in her hands a copy of the *Signa Antiqua*.

[19] We use the generally accepted spelling of her name – Angelika Kauffmann – in this volume.

[20] For more about Angelika's prints, see T. G. Natter, ed., *Angelica Kauffmann: A Woman of Immense Talent* (Berlin: Hatje Kantz, 2007), 234–247.

[21] A. Rosenthal, *Angelica Kauffmann: Art and Sensibility* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 223.