



Herman Meindertsz Doncker, *Three Children*, ca. 1645, oil on oak panel, 40.2 x 29.2 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Dutch artist Herman Meindertsz Doncker (1600–ca. 1666) was a proficient portraitist who often used the same postures for his models, whether they were adults or children. This painting is a group portrait of three children, possibly sisters, who are wearing similar conservative black

dresses that resemble the attire of puritan women. The eldest girl, who is standing behind the other two figures, enacts a dignified pose as she looks directly at the viewer, while the second oldest, wearing a slightly different dress with a belt and black collar, is pointing with her right hand to her right. The youngest child almost looks like a miniature version of her older sister with the exception of her apron and different collar. The group is standing in front of an undefined landscape; the sky is seen above a hill, yet the soil upon which they stand seems to end abruptly where a looming hill begins. This group portrait represents the young subjects as embodying ideals of modesty and of the proper woman according to the Protestant faith. However, it also subtly showcases the wealth of the family to which these children belong through their lace trim collars and the protective and highly sought-after coral necklaces of the eldest and youngest girls.

Georges-Étienne Carrière