FRANS HALS STUDIES

Frans Hals

Iconography – Technique – Reputation

Amsterdam
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Frans Hals

Frans Hals Studies

Frans Hals Studies provides a platform for new research into Dutch 17th-century art, exploring Haarlem as a center of artistic innovation. In collaboration with the Frans Hals Museum, this book series aims to initiate, stimulate, and facilitate art historical and material-technical research on the work of Frans Hals, his milieu, and the impact his work had on contemporaries and later artists.

The book series includes academic research originating from the Frans Hals Museum's research program, focusing on the workshop practices of Frans Hals and his Haarlem contemporaries, as well as other relevant contexts. The series also welcomes book proposals from scholars not affiliated with the Frans Hals Museum. It caters to an international audience of art historians, museum curators, conservators, librarians, and other specialists.

Frans Hals

Iconography – Technique – Reputation

Edited by
Norbert E. Middelkoop and
Rudi E.O. Ekkart

Amsterdam University Press

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Reputation

Foreword

The reputation of Frans Hals (1582/83–1666) has experienced high peaks and deep troughs. In his own time, his innovative, 'rough' painting style was recognized by authors of travelogues and fellow artists. But his work went swiftly out of favour after his death. Hals fell into obscurity: he was no longer included automatically in historical surveys of seventeenth-century Dutch art and hardly any research was done into his life and work. This situation persisted for a long time, only taking a turn for the better around the mid-nineteenth century, when the French journalist and art critic Théophile Thoré-Bürger (1807–1869) rediscovered Hals. In his wake, the artistic community – this time modern artists – once more took up the painter's work and Hals came in for renewed study.[1] Yet even with the involvement of these figures, Hals's reputation still lagged behind those of Rembrandt and Vermeer, which had been rising sharply since the nineteenth century; the same was true of scholarship on Hals in comparison with the work on Rembrandt and Vermeer.

As described in the introduction to this edited volume, which surveys the current state of Hals scholarship, the Frans Hals Museum has carried out a great deal of research into its namesake since its foundation. Nevertheless, many questions remain, to which Hals specialists have yet to find unambiguous answers. The Frans Hals Museum – holder of the largest and most important collection of Frans Hals paintings in the world – therefore decided to establish a scholarly platform, with the aim of initiating, stimulating, collating and disseminating art historical and material-technical research into Frans Hals. Publications in the accompanying *Frans Hals Studies* series will be an important means of enabling this.

There could be no better moment to launch this series than a period in which a major Frans Hals exhibition has been showing at no fewer than three of the most important museums for seventeenth-century Dutch art. The exhibition opened at the National Gallery in London (30 September 2023–21 January 2024), before travelling to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (15 February 2024–9 June 2024) and then – in a different form, placing Hals more in context – to the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin (12 July 2024–3 November 2024).

These events, mounted in special collaboration with the Frans Hals Museum, prompted the presentations on the current state of Hals research by an international network of scholars. This exchange of knowledge took place on January 8 and 9 2023 and would not have been possible without the generous support of the Rijksmuseum. I warmly thank Norbert Middelkoop, who took on the substantive organization of bringing the scholars together with such verve, and Giovanna di Galbo, who

1 This topic will be discussed in a later volume in the *Frans Hals Studies* series.

meticulously oversaw the practical arrangements. Almost 100 scholars and other participants were offered a rich programme and the opportunity to stroll around the galleries of the Frans Hals Museum at leisure to contemplate and discuss the fifteen paintings by Hals in the museum's collection display, including eight group portraits, as well as seven temporary loans.[2]

I am most grateful to all contributors who agreed to share their research and ideas for this volume. This volume would not have come about without the hard work of again Norbert Middelkoop, who continued to encourage all the authors and to edit their respective contributions. I likewise extend my gratitude to Rudi Ekkart for also commenting on the papers.

Together, the contributions collected here provide an excellent overview of research into the work of Frans Hals, which can be divided into three sections: iconography, technique and reputation. As such, this collection is not only an eminently suitable first instalment in the planned series of books; it can also function as a starting point for further research facilitated by the Frans Hals Museum.

Marrigje Rikken
Former Head of Collections and Exhibitions, Frans Hals Museum

2 Apart from the eleven Hals paintings listed by Slive 1970–1974, vol. 2 (introductory pages), the museum is home to the *Portrait of Theodorus Schrevelius* (ibid., vol. 3, no. 8), acquired in 2003; *Portrait of a Man, presumably Gerrit Jansz van Santen* (ibid., no. 139), on loan from the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage since 2008; *Portrait of a Woman* (ibid., no. D78), on loan since 2011; *Portrait of a Man* (ibid., no. 199), on loan since 2013. Furthermore, the *All Civic Guard Paintings* exhibition included the 'Meagre Company' from the Rijksmuseum (ibid., no. 80), while *Newcomers: Flemish Artists in Haarlem 1580–1630*, included *Portrait of a Man* (ibid., no. D37), *Portrait of a Man* (ibid., no. 9), *Two Fisher Boys* (ibid., no. D16) and *Portraits of Lucas de Clercq and Feijntje van Steenkiste* (ibid., nos. 104–105).

Frans Hals: A Survey of Current Research

From the moment Haarlem's art collection moved from the town hall to its current premises in 1913, the Frans Hals Museum has been a renowned centre of knowledge on the artist whose name it bears. This is, first of all, because of the richness of its holdings, which include the eight group portraits painted for Haarlem institutions, making the museum the best possible place to study Hals's artistic development throughout his career; but secondly, because many of its staff – from curators and conservators to directors – have been involved in the study of the master and his work.

Gerrit Gratama (1874–1965), director from 1912 to 1946, saw to it that the new Frans Hals Museum housed a small paintings restoration studio from the start. Having himself trained as a painter, he carried out minor treatments there, while also promoting and overseeing the overall restoration of the civic guard and governors group portraits. This work was carried out by several members of the De Wild family of conservators, though not without controversy regarding the 'modern' methods used, including scientific analysis. Gratama also curated the first exhibition devoted to Frans Hals in Europe in 1937, marking the 75th anniversary of the museum since it opened in the Haarlem town hall.[1] His book on the master, written the following year, finally appeared in 1943.[2]

His successor Henk Baard (1906–2000), director from 1946 to 1972, also wrote on Frans Hals. His book on Hals's civic guard paintings was published in 1949 and – unusually for the time – contained large colour reproductions of details.[3] On the occasion of the museum's 100th anniversary in 1962, Baard organized the second Frans Hals exhibition in Haarlem, for which he could rely on Seymour Slive (1920–2014), who spent a year with his family living in Aerdenhout in order to study the master.[4] While Gerda Kurtz (1899–1989), the director of the Haarlem Municipal Archives, played a major role in facilitating his study of archival sources, long-time 'scientific assistant' Carla van Hees (1905–?) – in practice the museum's first curator

1 See Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 1937.
2 Gratama 1943.
3 Baard 1949.
4 Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 1962.

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– helped prepare the entries for the show's catalogue. Baard's 1981 book on Hals is dedicated to Slive, who by then had published his three volumes on the master.[5]

It was Seymour Slive who took the initiative for the next major Hals exhibition, which opened in 1989 at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, before travelling to the Royal Academy of Arts in London and finishing up at the Frans Hals Museum in 1990.[6] That Haarlem was added to the show's itinerary was largely thanks to the successful lobbying of Derk Snoep (1935–2005), the museum's director from 1983 to 2000, and Pieter Biesboer (b. 1944), Curator of Old Masters between 1976 and 2009. This time, the exhibition catalogue not only contained Slive's introduction and entries but also important essays by Biesboer and other Frans Hals Museum staff members, Ella Hendriks (b. 1960), Koos Levy-van Halm (b. 1940) and Liesbeth Abraham (b. 1962), while Irene van Thiel-Stroman (1932–2021) presented no fewer than 190 documents relating to Hals, mainly retrieved from the city archives – a treasure trove cherished by researchers to this day.

Prior to the exhibition on the civic guard in Holland (1988), Hals's five Haarlem civic guard paintings were analysed and restored by Anne van Grevenstein (b. 1947), head of the paintings conservation studio from 1983 to 1987, and her team.[7] Her former assistant and successor Ella Hendriks led the studio between 1988 and 1999, and together with Koos Levy she studied 59 of the 86 Hals paintings present in the 1990 exhibition, which culminated in an important report on Hals's painting technique and materials.[8] Hendriks was succeeded by her former assistant Liesbeth Abraham and intern Mireille te Marvelde (b. 1962), who still work for the museum. Abraham and te Marvelde were in charge of the recent research and conservation project involving Hals's three governors group portraits between 2013 and 2017, together with Herman van Putten (b. 1961), a project that was presented to the public halfway through the exhibition *Frans Hals: Work in Progress* (2015). As a consequence of the extensive expertise present in the Frans Hals Museum's paintings conservation studio, fellow institutions regularly ask for advice before starting treatment on their Halses.[9]

Pieter Biesboer's scholarly articles on the master over the years, based on thorough archive research, have been pivotal to our art historical knowledge, enriching our view of Hals's world and clientele.[10] He not only convincingly identified various sitters

5 Baard 1981 and Slive 1970–74.

6 Cat. Exhib. Washington / London / Haarlem 1989–90.

7 See Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 1988. Preliminary reports on the individual paintings were published in Middelkoop and Van Grevenstein 1989.

8 Hendriks and Levy-van Halm 1991.

9 Liesbeth Abraham was involved in the restorations of the *Portrait of a Man* from the Dijon Musée des Beaux Arts (2016) and of the three Frans Hals paintings at the Sao Paolo Museo de Arte (2022).

10 Biesboer 1989–90.

but also created an invaluable source for future research with his book *Collections of Paintings in Haarlem 1572–1745*, published in 2001.[11] Meanwhile, several exhibitions at the Frans Hals Museum focused on the artist's pioneering achievements in the broader context of seventeenth-century Haarlem (and Dutch) art and culture, a line continued under Anna Tummers (b. 1974), Curator of Old Masters until 2020.[12] She also explored Hals's relation to famous predecessors and contemporaries, placing his so-called 'rough style' in a wider, international context. The 2013 exhibition on the subject, *Frans Hals: Eye to Eye with Rembrandt, Rubens and Titian*, marked the 100th anniversary of the museum in its current premises. She also initiated two research projects on Hals-related attribution issues, which assessed relatively new technical research methods as well as advanced data visualization tools.[13] In 2018–19, lastly, the museum hosted the exhibition *Frans Hals and the Moderns*, curated by Marrigje Rikken (b. 1984), the museum's Head of Collections from 2017 to 2024.[14] The show explored how Hals's rough style was recognized and applauded in the second half of the nineteenth century by painters like Edouard Manet, Max Liebermann and Vincent van Gogh.

The previous symposium devoted to Frans Hals at the Frans Hals Museum took place in 2013, coinciding with the *Eye to Eye* exhibition. More recently, in 2019, the symposium *Hals Meets Manet, Singer Sargent, Van Gogh* accompanied the show *Frans Hals and the Moderns*.[15] Last year's gathering, which took place on January 8th and 9th 2023 under the title *Frans Hals: A Survey of Current Research*, set out to present the latest study findings on Hals, preceding the 2023–24 exhibitions on the master in London, Amsterdam and Berlin. Most of those papers are published in the present volume.[16] Three subsequent Curators of Old Masters, three paintings conservators and a freelance art historian, all of whom have previously or are still working for the Frans Hals Museum, are represented as contributors – evidence, if

11 See Nichols, De Belie and Biesboer 2018; Biesboer 2023; as well as Biesboer 2001.

12 See for instance Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 1988; Cat. Exhib. Haarlem/Munich 2008–09; Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 2011–12; Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 2017.

13 *Frans Hals or not Frans Hals?* (2016–18) and – together with Robert Erdmann – *21st Century Connoisseurship: Smart Tools for the Analysis of Seventeenth-Century Painting* (2018–22), which was funded by the Dutch Science Foundation (NWO); see Tummers *et al.* 2019a–b and Tummers and Erdmann 2024.

14 This project was initiated by Anna Tummers.

15 A volume of essays from this symposium will be published in the near future.

16 The papers presented by Jaap van der Veen and Friso Lammertse, 'Frans Hals's Workshop and his "Volck"', and Bart Cornelis, 'More than Meets the Eye: Hals's *Portrait of a Man* from Chatsworth', were published in Cornelis *et al.* 2023–24, pp. 62–79 (*passim*) and pp. 120–127, respectively. The joint paper of Liesbeth Abraham and Koos Levy-van Halm, 'More than Decoration: The Map in Frans Hals's *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital*', could not be presented at the symposium but is published in the current volume.

it were needed, that the building up, cherishing and sharing of knowledge on the master at the museum that bears his name is considered as natural and important as ever.

However, these are not the only contributors. It is our great fortune to have so many scholars who cherish a passion for Frans Hals represented in this publication. We are extremely grateful that they have been willing to share their knowledge with us. Our special thanks are also owed to Rudi Ekkart, whose additional comments on the essays were welcomed and appreciated by the authors. Some papers have been slightly adapted or enlarged following the opening of the Frans Hals exhibition at the National Gallery in London in September 2023, and the publication of the accompanying book.[17]

More than 350 years after Frans Hals's death, it is gratifying to see that attention for the great Haarlem master and his legacy is still very much alive among scholars, museum visitors and other art lovers.

Norbert E. Middelkoop
Curator of Old Masters, Frans Hals Museum, 2021–2024
Amsterdam, Spring 2024

17 Cornelis *et al.* 2023–24.

Iconography

1. The Religion(s) of Frans Hals

Frans Grijzenhout

Abstract: Little is known about Frans Hals's personal beliefs. He rarely painted religious subjects and it is hard to find references to spiritual convictions within the corpus of his painted portraits. We know, however, that the population of Haarlem at that time was divided along complex religious lines. How did Frans Hals navigate this intricate terrain as an artist and as a private person? What role did religion play in the commissions he received in the course of his career? And how did the portraits of Protestant ministers like Swalmius and Revius function in their own households?

Keywords: Old Master Painting, 17th century, Haarlem, Portraiture, Dutch Reformed Church, Henricus Swalmius, Jacobus Revius

We know next to nothing about Frans Hals's personal religious convictions. Before leaving Antwerp for the Dutch Republic, his father Franchoys Hals professed to be a Catholic in 1585, but he may have done so under pressure of the extreme circumstances in which the Low Countries found themselves at the time. Frans's younger brother Dirck was baptized in the Reformed church in Haarlem in 1591. For his part, Frans was married twice, to a Protestant woman in each case, and had all his children christened in a Protestant church. They, in turn, seem to have remained Protestants as well. His second wife, Liesbeth Reyniers, joined the Reformed Church in 1643, while Hals himself only did so in October 1655, at the age of around 73, probably with social welfare as his main motivation.[1]

There are virtually no paintings with a religious subject by Hals that reveal anything about his own convictions. We have no idea for whom or on what occasion

1 For the relevant documents and commentaries, see: Van Thiel-Stroman 1989, doc. nos. 2, 3, 4, 10, 23, 24, 26, 29, 31, 38, 43, 57, 62, 91 and 151; for the registration of Lysbeth Reyniers, see Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief (NHA), acc. no. 1551, *Kerkenraad van de Nederlands-Hervormde Gemeente Haarlem*, inv. no. 101, Lidmatenboek 1633–1646, not paginated, on or after 2 October 1643. See also Nadler 2022, pp. 268–270.

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he painted his Four Evangelists series.[2] Nor does the only contemporary mention in Dutch notarial acts of 'a prodigal son by Hals' help very much; I think it unlikely that this description could apply to *Jonker Ramp and his Mistress* in New York, although perhaps it does to the early painting formerly in Berlin.[3]

Overall, my impression is that Frans Hals always leaned towards Protestantism, but we have no indication that he was a committed, let alone a dogmatic believer. There was obviously no suspicion of heretical tendencies on Hals's part in 1629 when the burgomasters of Haarlem commissioned him, together with his colleagues Pieter de Molijn and Jan van de Velde – both registered members of the Reformed Church in Haarlem – to inspect and to report in writing on the suitability of a room in the Werckhuys that had been assigned to the imprisoned Johannes Torrentius for the purpose of painting. This suggests that Hals, like his two colleagues, was a Reformed Protestant at heart, or at least that he was perceived as such by the authorities at the time.[4]

As a portrait painter, Frans Hals depended entirely on commissions from wealthy individuals and local institutions. We know from the *Meagre Company* episode that Hals could not ask much more than 60 guilders for a full-length portrait in his civic guard pieces.[5] He might have received substantially more for the unusual full-length portrait of Willem van Heythuysen with its attributes, additional figures, and landscape (see p. 61, fig. 15), but probably not much more than 60 guilders for the many three-quarter-length portraits of wealthy individuals, and probably less for his half-figures or even smaller panels. With an average asking price of 50 to 70 guilders for a portrait, Hals would have had to paint at least six to eight portraits a year in order to make ends meet, and I do not think he could have afforded to turn down commissions from anyone on account of his or their religious conviction.

2 S. Slive in Cat. Exhib. Washington / London / Haarlem 1989–90, pp. 193–197; Slive 2014, pp. 150–156; see also Liedtke 2011, pp. 19–21.

3 Van Thiel-Stroman 1989, doc. nos. 115 and 119; Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, pp. 13–14, no. 20 and pp. 114–115, no. L 1, respectively.

4 Van Thiel-Stroman 1989, doc. no. 46; with many thanks to Christopher Brown who alerted me to the relevance of this episode. The foundational publication on Torrentius is Bredius 1909. See also Brown 1997 and Cerutti and Coolen 2014.

5 Van Thiel-Stroman 1989, doc. nos. 73–75 and 78; Middelkoop 2019, vol. 1, p. 84, suggests that Hals's moderate 'Haarlem' price may have been a factor in hiring him for this Amsterdam group portrait. The only known price paid for a portrait by Hals's contemporary and competitor Verspronck is 60 guilders for a portrait of Augustijn Bloemert in 1658; see Ekkart 1979, p. 19. In 1663, Jan de Bray received 250 guilders for a Haarlem group portrait, which corresponds to ca. 60 guilders per person; see W. van de Watering and K. Levy in Köhler 2006, pp. 408–409, no. 58 and Giltaij 2017, pp. 132–134, no. 42. For a more general estimate of portrait prices in the seventeenth century, see Ekkart 2007, p. 57.

Fig. 1. Jan van de Velde (ca. 1593–1641) after Frans Hals, *Portrait of Johannes Acronius (1565–1627)*, 1627 or later. Engraving, 232 × 164 mm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-OB-76.146)

We know that Haarlem was a religiously diverse town, to put it mildly. Until at least the 1630s, in fact, it can fairly be called a religious battlefield.[6] When Jan van de Velde published his print after Hals's portrait of Johannes Acronius (fig. 1) – probably just after the latter's death in 1627 – the accompanying verse spoke of Acronius's courageous fight against heretical sects like the Mennonites and Arminians.[7] Words,

6 Spaans 1989, esp. ch. 4, pp. 109–138.

7 After the painting in Berlin; Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, p. 31, no. 47.

it was said, issued from his mouth with the force of thunder and lightning. The Latin version is even more explicit, speaking of a razor-sharp Acronius fist-fighting with his religious opponents.[8] These words reflect one aspect of the religious climate in the Low Countries in the first three to four decades of the seventeenth century: the tendency – or rather, the urge – to orthodoxy and hence to disagreement, and to organized religious dispute between theologians of different backgrounds, in which both parties hoped to persuade the other, to silence, or even to crush the other party with arguments, preferably taken from Scripture. And not only in Protestant circles: the Catholic priest Joannes Spangius of Leeuwarden was honoured as a 'devout wrestler' who had courageously placed himself in the ring to defend God's people and the (Catholic) Church.[9]

Hals's Protestant ministers

When we take a broader look at the body of people who commissioned a portrait from Frans Hals, we find they include a relatively high number of Protestant clergymen. Hals painted at least fifteen of them, most of whom, like Acronius, adhered to orthodox Calvinism. This can certainly be said of the bulk of Hals's earlier portraits of Protestant ministers and theologians, such as Johannes Bogaert, Michiel Jansz van Middelhoven, Samuel Ampzing, and Caspar Sibelius; as well as of the later portraits of Theodor Wykenburg, Hendrick Swalmius, Jacobus Revius, Adriaen Tegularius, Jan Ruyll, and Herman Langelius. Johannes Hoornbeeck belonged to a slightly more moderate group, who pursued a certain orthodox unity. However, by the time his portrait was painted in 1645, some of the heat had already gone out of the religious debate.[10]

To my knowledge, Conradus Viëtor was the only minister portrayed by Hals who belonged to the Lutherans, whom orthodox Calvinists considered a sect.[11]

8 'Acer in adversos sic pugnat Acronius hosteis; sic tonat ad linguae fulmina dia suae' (in Dutch: 'So heeft Acronius in alle dapperheden / Der secten wrevelgeest oyt mannelyk bestreden! / So donderd syne stem wanneer syn yver spreeckt / En heyl'ge blixemskragt uyt sijne lippen breekt!').

9 Theodor Matham, *Portrait of Joannes Spangius*, engraving, 297 × 202 mm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (inv. no. RP-P-OB-23.262,0), with a poem by the Amsterdam priest Andreas van der Kruyssen: 'O vrome worstelaer die moedigh in het velt / voor Godes volck, en kerck, u onlangs had gestelt'.

10 For these portraits (in the order of the enumeration in the main text): Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, p. 120, no. L 8 (Bogaert); pp. 23–24, nos. 38–39 (Middelhoven and his wife); p. 46, no. 76 (Ampzing); pp. 121–122, or L 12 (Sibelius); p. 125, no. L 17 (Wykenburg); pp. 67–68, no. 126 (Swalmius); p. 125, no. L 16 (Revius); p. 106, no. 207 (Tegularius); p. 110, no. 215 (Langelius); and pp. 84–85, no. 165 (Hoornbeeck). There are a few portraits by Hals that are supposed to represent Protestant ministers: ibid., pp. 24–25, no. 41; pp. 74–75, no. 143; pp. 106–107, no. 208, (Ruyll?); p. 107, no. 209; and pp. 107–108, no. 210 (Ruyll?).

11 Ibid., pp. 77–78, no. 152.

Fig. 2. Frans Hals, *Family portrait of (probably) Nicolaes van Heuvel (1600/03–1661) and Susanna van Halmael (1606/07–1667), their daughter Maria (1629/30–1695) and an anonymous child*, ca. 1635. Canvas, 111.8 × 89.9 cm, Cincinnati, Cincinnati Art Museum, Bequest of Mary M. Emery (acc. no. 1927.399)

As far as we know, none of them were Arminians, while Zaffius and Nicolaes Stenius were the only Catholic clergy of whom we have portraits by Hals.[12] The under-representation of Catholic priests among Hals's sitters need not surprise us,

12 Ibid., p. 1, no. 1, and p. 94, no. 179.

since Haarlem happened to be home to quite a few excellent portraitists with a Catholic background: Cornelis van Haerlem in the early seventeenth century, father and son Verspronck, Pieter Claesz Soutman, Cornelis Visscher with his elaborate portraits in chalk or print, and members of the De Grebber and De Bray dynasties could all easily cater for portraits of Catholic priests, for which there was strong local demand.[13]

I do not believe, furthermore, that any other seventeenth-century painter portrayed as many local Mennonites as Hals did. We have long known about Hals's 1635 portraits of the Mennonite couple Lucas de Clercq and Feijntje van Steenkiste in the Rijksmuseum. I have sought in recent years to extend the group of Hals's Mennonite sitters to include his portraits of the brewer Hendrick Noppen, his wife Geertruyt van Santen and her father Gerrit Jansz van Santen; the watchmaker Matthijs Jansz Bockelts and his wife Maria van Hout; and the family of Nicolaes van Heuvel and Susanna van Halmael with their children (fig. 2). A few more examples definitely exist.[14] All in all, I suspect that Hals painted around fifteen to twenty Mennonite sitters, which is a remarkably high number compared to most other Dutch portrait painters, including those with a specific Mennonite background like Govert Flinck, Michiel van Musscher, and Lambert Jacobsz and his son Abraham van den Tempel.[15]

This brings us back to the question of whether Frans Hals's personal convictions might have played a role in the composition of the group of clergymen who commissioned portraits from him. As Hals leaned towards Protestantism and was well acquainted with Haarlem civic guard circles, the chamber of rhetoric, and the painters' guild, there was no reason for the local social, economic, and political elite – including leading figures from the Reformed church and wealthy Mennonites – not to go to Hals for their portraits. More broadly, I think we can apply Willem Frijhoff and Marijke Spies's principle of 'omgangsoecumene' ('ecumenism of social life') to this situation: no matter how sharp their ideological and religious differences may have been, most people in the seventeenth century could not afford and would not have wished to purchase from or to supply to only people of their own religious conviction; they communicated and worked with one another on a practical, everyday basis.[16] The same must have been true for Frans Hals and his sitters.

13 On these painters, see, among others, Van Thiel 1999; Ekkart 1979; Blankert et al. 1999; Dirkse 2001; Biesboer et al. 2008.

14 Grijzenhout 2013; Grijzenhout et al. 2014; Grijzenhout 2021; Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, pp. 75–76, nos. 146–147; pp. 72–73, nos. 137–139; and pp. 57–58, no. 102.

15 Van Eikema Hommes et al. 2016; Gerhardt 2007; Van Eeghen 1953.

16 Frijhoff and Spies 2004, p. 358. On this issue, see also Groenveld 1995, esp. pp. 49–60. On art historical aspects of this complex: Van Thiel 1990; Manuth 1994; Van Eck 1999.

Fig. 3 Frans Hals, *Portrait of Michiel Jansz van Middelhoven (1562–1638)*, 1626. Canvas, 86 × 70 cm. Present whereabouts unknown

Fig. 4. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Sara Andriesdr Hessix (c. 1565–after 1636)*, 1626. Canvas, 86 × 70 cm. Lisbon, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Calouste Gulbenkian Museum (inv. no. 214). Photograph: Catarina Gomes Ferreira

Hals was, after all, an outstanding and obviously affordable portrait painter, who was in high demand even among Protestant clergy from outside Haarlem. His lively style could, moreover, add to the effect of rhetorical persuasion that was expected of a preacher's portrait – something that seems to have played a role in the iconography of Michiel Jansz van Middelhoven's and Sibelius's portraits in particular. The gesture Middelhoven (fig. 3) makes seems to be quite specific, and can be interpreted as what John Bulwer described in his book *Chironomia* (1644) on the rhetorical use of the hand as 'contraria distinguet': 'The top of the thumb joyn'd to the middle of the naile of the right index, the other fingers remisse, is fit to distinguish contraries'.[17] In this portrait too, therefore, emphasis has been placed on religious disputation – hardly surprising, since Middelhoven was known for his firm anti-Remonstrant stance.[18] Sibelius's gesture seems more generic, but the verse – obviously written by Sibelius himself – below the printed version of

17 Bulwer 1644, p. 75, with thanks to Michiel Franken who reminded me of Bulwer's publication. A comparable gesture can be found in the printed portrait by Steven van Lamsweerde of the Utrecht minister Andreas Suavius, 1648.

18 Van der Aa 1852–78, vol. 12, pp. 838–839.

Fig. 5. Jonas Suyderhoef (1614–1686) after Frans Hals, *Portrait of Caspar Sibelius (1590–1658)*, 1637. Engraving, 301 × 232 mm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-OB-60.764)

his portrait, showing him with his mouth open, makes his (and maybe also Hals's) intention explicit: 'Et pure legimus Christum Paulumque loquentes' ('Truly, we read Christ and Paul as they were speaking') (fig. 5). The learned theologian Sibelius evidently wanted to be represented in the act of speaking, just as Christ and St Paul speak to us through their written words.[19]

In most other pictures, Hals opted to depict his Protestant ministers wearing skullcaps,[20] with the exception of Viëtor, who wore a hat, and Middelhoven, who

19 A smaller version of this print, by or after Suyderhoef, from 1642, which also serves as an illustration to the first volume of Sibelius's *Opera omnia theologica*, Amsterdam 1644, has a slightly different text.

20 On the use of the skullcap, see De Winkel 2006, pp. 40–43.

was bareheaded. Most of the sitters hold a book in their hand: Acronius clearly has a folio bible, others usually hold a smaller volume, possibly a psalter or a New Testament. In Sibelius's case the book is fully opened, but usually the subject has placed a finger between the pages, suggesting that he was interrupted in his reading by the painter or the beholder of the portrait.[21] Sometimes the sitter also has a hand placed on the breast or heart as a gesture of sincerity and fidelity.

But sincerity and fidelity towards whom, one wonders? Most likely towards God, Christ, and the community of the Church. Yet some of these portraits formed a pair, with the minister's wife as pendant, so they must also have served as more or less regular pendant portraits of husband and wife. This was certainly true in Middelhoven's case (figs. 3 and 4), very likely so for Swalmius, and, as we will discover later, probably for Revius, too. In each case, the male sitter had to comply with a dual expectation of loyalty in the eyes of the beholder: to his religious conviction and higher vocation on the one hand, and to his earthly wife on the other.

Of course, Hals was not the only portrait painter who had to cope with this dichotomy – think of Rembrandt's masterful representation of Cornelis Anslo and his wife. And we might also question whether even the sitters themselves thought in such conflicting terms: when Hendrick Swalmius remarried in 1640, the marriage contract between him and his second wife was preceded by ample references to what the Bible had to say about the union between husband and wife.[22]

As Annette de Vries has pointed out, Protestant ministers in the Dutch Republic were prominent figures with a high public profile. Not only were they seen and heard every Sunday in church during religious services and on weekdays in their local pastoral activities, some of them also participated in learned and heated religious disputes with Arminians and Mennonites or contributed to the local and national intellectual and cultural debate. Hence we find printed portraits of these role models, along with those of stadholders and naval heroes, in the stocks of contemporary print shops and in many a Dutch interior at the time, usually in the more public rooms of the house, such as the 'voorhuis'.[23]

Most of Hals's painted portraits of Protestant ministers were, in fact, used as the basis for portrait prints. In all probability, some of them will actually have been painted with an eye to their future use as the starting point for a print. This seems likely to be the case with the painted portraits of Acronius, Ampzing, Sibelius, Swalmius, and Tegularius, where the small size of the original seems to foreshadow the more or less corresponding dimensions of the prints

21 See S. Slive in Cat. Exhib. Washington / London / Haarlem 1989–90, pp. 246–247, no. 40; pp. 300–303, no. 60.

22 Haarlem, NHA, acc. no. 1617, *Old Notarial Archives* (*ONA*), inv. no. 236, notary Johannes Colterman, fols. 39–40v, copy of the marriage contract between Henricus Swalmius and Ytjen Willems, 25 October 1640.

23 De Vries 2004, pp. 107–115.

done after these originals by Jan van de Velde and Jonas Suyderhoef, sometimes immediately, sometimes many years later.[24] In several seventeenth-century Haarlem inventories we find references to 'predicantsbortges' (printed portraits of vicars) after portraits by Hals: Acronius and Swalmius seem to have been especially popular.[25]

Henricus Swalmius

While the public display of printed portraits of Protestant minsters after Hals is fairly well documented, we know very little about the private use of the original portraits. Only in the cases of Swalmius and Revius do we have an inventory at our disposal that can help us understand how the painted portraits of these clergymen functioned originally.

An inventory was drawn up on 12 September 1662 of the goods belonging to the late Henricus Swalmius, who had been a minister in the Reformed church in Haarlem from 1625 until his retirement in 1649. He died three years later, on 11 July 1652.[26] The inventory was taken at the house of his second wife, Yda Willems, whom Swalmius had married in November 1640, following the deaths of his first wife, Judith Pieters van Breda, and of Yda Willems's first husband, Hendrick Vestens.[27] Swalmius and his second wife were married on the condition that his humble belongings and her more wealthy possessions, amounting to more than 25,000 guilders, would revert to their respective families after the death of the longest living marriage

24 On Hals's small painted portrait panels and their prints, see Rinnooy Kan 2023.

25 According to the Getty Provenance Index, Acronius's portrait is mentioned in the Haarlem inventories of Maria Veer (1642), Quirijn Jansz Damast (1650), Dirck Smuijser and Catharina Warmont (1653), Pieter Cornelisz van Teylingen and Marta Willems van Bueren (1670); Swalmius in those of Willem van Heythuysen (1650) Carel Carelsz (1650), Isaac Bevel (1657), Balthasar Cornelisz Groen and Maria van Vaerle (1671); the occurrence of the portraits of other preachers portrayed by Hals is more incidental.

26 Haarlem, NHA, acc. no. 1617, *ONA*, inv. no. 388, notary Jacob van de Camer, fols. 76–80, 12 September 1662, with the explicit mention of the date of his death; most websites erroneously take 1649, the year of Swalmius's retirement, for that of his demise.

27 She was the youngest of five children of Pieter Sijbrechtsz van Breda the Elder (?–1609 Delft) and Elisabeth Praijmans. The banns of marriage with Henricus Swalmius were posted in Leiden on 21/24 June 1600. The last time she is mentioned in a public document is on 1 August 1632, when she witnessed a baptism in Delft. Her burial date is not documented in Haarlem, but she must have died before 20 April 1640, when Pieter Claesz van den Brande, a relative of hers, informs Henricus Swalmius that he was not permitted to divide his former wife's estate in Van den Brande's absence; see Haarlem, NHA, 1617, *ONA*, inv. no. 167, notary Jacob van Bosvelt, fol. 120. Yda Willem's first husband, Hendrick Vestens, was buried in the week of 19 November 1638; see NHA, acc. no. 2142, *Doop-, trouw- en begraafboeken* (*DTB*) *van Haarlem* 1578–1811, inv. no. 70, p. 282. The name of Hendrick Vestens', Henricus Swalmius's later wife, is often misspelled as 'Yfıen', whereas her real name was Yda, or Ytjen Willems.

Fig. 6. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Henricus Swalmius (1578/79–1652)*, 1639. Panel, 27 × 20 cm. Detroit, The Detroit Institute of Arts, City of Detroit and Founders Society Joint Purchase (inv. no. 49.347)

Fig. 7. Frans Hals, *Portrait of (probably) Judith Pieters van Breda (1581/82–1639/40)*, 1639. Panel, 28.5 × 21 cm. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (inv. no. 2498 OK)

partner.[28] So it was that Swalmius's personal possessions came to be inventoried in September 1662 after Yda Willems had died in July of that year,[29] ten years after his own death.

Since Swalmius had decided to live with his second wife in her house on Oude Gracht near the bridge to Koningstraat, the inventory can only offer us a glimpse of the original setting of the portrait that Frans Hals made of him in 1639 (fig. 6). Henricus may have been inspired by the example set by his brother Eleasar Swalmius, a minister in Amsterdam, who had himself and his wife Eva Ruardi portrayed by Rembrandt, probably in the second half of the 1630s.[30] After Henricus Swalmius's retirement in 1649, ten years after Hals painted his portrait, it was used

28 The document mentioned in note 26 states that the inventory of the mutual possessions of Swalmius and his second wife was drawn up on 3 September 1652 and registered with notary Jacob Schoudt; I have not been able to trace this inventory in his protocols.

29 For her burial, see Haarlem, NHA, 2142, *DTB*, inv. no. 73, p. 293, 24 July 1662.

30 Grijzenhout, Van Sloten and Van der Veen 2020.

as the original for Jonas Suijderhoef's beautiful print. It is worth noting that the 1662 inventory mentions two portraits of Swalmius – a larger and a smaller one (which I would guess refers to the painted version, probably in a somewhat bigger frame, and the print, either in smaller frame or unframed) – together with two portraits of his grandparents and of a cousin in 'het voorhuis' of Yda Willems' house on Oude Gracht. It looks as though Swalmius wanted to imprint his genealogy on the semi-public 'voorhuis' of his second wife's home. Since her belongings are not listed, we do not know whether there were also portraits from her own line or that of her former husband, Hendrick Vestens. The latter had been a business partner of Willem van Heythuysen and was well acquainted with the Van Heuvel family.[31] Vestens's house on Oude Gracht was next door to that of the calligrapher Jean de la Chambre, whom Hals portrayed in 1638. Via Reverend Swalmius and his second wife Yda Willems, we thus have access to a specific part of Frans Hals's network of sitters from the 1630s.

The inventory does not mention a pendant portrait of Swalmius's first wife, which seems odd, since I agree that the 1639 panel in Rotterdam, showing a 57-year-old lady and only slightly larger than Swalmius's portrait, must indeed be the latter's first wife, Judith Pieters van Breda (fig. 7).[32] We know that her relatives, all living in Hamburg by that time, had taken over some of her personal belongings to the amount of 107 guilders and 3 stuivers, presumably including her portrait.[33] Whatever the case, shortly after his first wife's pendant portrait had been painted by Hals, Swalmius's portrait as a minister of the Reformed church must have functioned mainly in its own right, as an element intended to shape and represent the identity of the Swalmius family in the context of his second wife's house.

Jacobus Revius

The inventory of Jacobus Revius's estate, which is presented here for the first time, gives us a more balanced view of the context in which Hals's portraits of Protestant clergymen originally functioned. Revius was a highly respected author of Christian poetry and a well-known Calvinist theologian. He was called from his native Deventer in 1641 to become the regent of the 'Staten College' in Leiden – an

31 Haarlem, NHA, 1617, *ONA*, inv. no. 134-II, notary Jacob Schoudt, fols. 37–383, testament of Hendrick Vestens and Yda Willems, 28 November 1637: Willem van Heythuysen and Nicolaes van Heuvel are named as the executors of their will; see ibid., inv. no. 120, notary Jacob Schoudt, fol. 567, 7 November 1639; see also Biesboer 1995.

32 For a discussion of the likelihood of the combination of these portraits, see Ekkart 1995, pp. 94–95, no. 21.

33 Haarlem, NHA, 1617, *ONA*, inv. no. 172, notary Salomon Cousaert, fols. 248–249v, 6 August 1640.

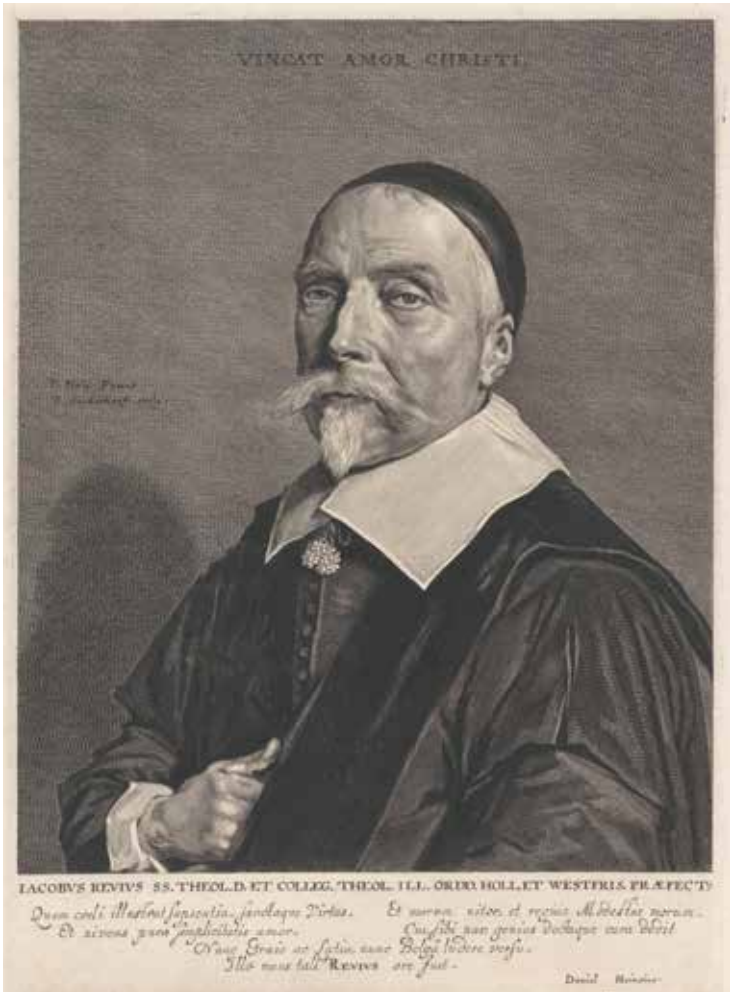

Fig. 8. Jonas Suyderhoef (1614-1686) after Frans Hals, *Portrait of Jacobus Revius (1586-1658)*, between 1642 and 1647. Engraving, 328 x 238 mm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-OB-60.756)

institution funded by the States of Holland, Zeeland, and West-Friesland to house and train future Reformed ministers. In her comprehensive 2012 biography of Revius, Enny de Bruijn surmises that the original portrait of Revius, the present whereabouts of which are unknown, must have been painted by Hals on the occasion of his inauguration, which took place in February 1642, and that Suyderhoef's print after the original painting (fig. 8) might have served as an introductory illustration to the published version of Revius's inaugural lecture.[34] Since not a single copy of this publication has been preserved, this suggestion cannot be verified. In any event, De Bruijn was able to establish that Suyderhoef's print

34 De Bruijn 2012, p. 385.

with Revius's portrait must have been in existence by 20 February 1647 at the latest, when Revius's brother Hendrick donated several copies to the magistrate of Deventer.[35]

De Bruijn's supposition that Hals's portrait of Revius was painted in or before 1642 seems to be confirmed by the inventory of Revius's belongings drawn up on 19 December 1658, one month after his death on 15 November, with the help of his second wife, Tanneke Bertens.[36] It was prepared at the regent's house on the grounds of the Staten College on Cellebroersgracht in Leiden and shows that Revius owned several portraits of scholars he admired, such as Scaliger, Anna Maria van Schurman and his friend Daniel Heinsius, and of the naval commander Piet Heijn. He also owned two portraits of other Protestant ministers, as well as portraits of his own relatives and of his first wife. Pictures hanging in the *saleth*, obviously the most representative room in the house, included one with the story of Abigail, a seascape, two landscapes, a few family portraits, 'the portrait of the deceased [Revius] on a copper plate together with a number of prints', and 'a large portrait [in 't groot] of the deceased and of his first wife'. We do not know of any painted portrait of Revius other than the one by Hals and no other portraits of him are mentioned in this inventory, so I assume this must refer to Hals's portrait. As in the case of Middelhoven and Swalmius, it apparently had a pendant with the likeness of Revius's first wife, Christina Augustinus (1587–1643), whom Revius had married in 1615. Since she died in December 1643, the portraits of Jacobus Revius and Christina Augustinus as mentioned in the inventory must have been painted before that date.[37] If, therefore, these really were the portraits by Hals, as I presume, we are not only looking for the lost original of Revius's portrait by Hals, but also for its possible pendant. Among the existing works of Frans Hals, the only candidate I can find is the portrait of around 1640 of an unknown middle-aged woman in the National Gallery, London (fig. 9).[38]

Revius's painted portrait and that of his wife seem to have functioned in the representative context of the theologian in his formal position as regent of the Staten College. The same reception room was home to the original copper plate that Suyderhoef made for the print after Hals's portrait, copies of which were also

35 Ibid., p. 585 n. 25.

36 Leiden, Erfgoed Leiden (EL), *ONA*, inv. no. 898, notary Pieter Gerardsz van Tielt, act no. 160, 19 December 1658; see also ibid., inv. no. 899, act nos. 149–153, inventory and division of the estate, 14 January 1659–11 December 1659; these documents were unknown to De Bruijn 2012 (see pp. 197 and 165).

37 Christina Augustinus was baptized in Amsterdam on 27 October 1587; Amsterdam City Archives, acc. no. 5001, *Doop-, trouw- en begraafboeken van de stad Amsterdam* (*DTB*) *1553–1811*, inv. no. 38, p. 31 (not in De Bruijn 2012).

38 Bart Cornelis of the National Gallery London kindly let me know that the canvas of this portrait seems to have been cut down at the sides and the bottom.

Fig. 9. Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Middle-Aged Woman*, ca. 1640. Canvas, 61.4 × 47 cm. London, National Gallery, bought (Lewis Fund), 1876 (inv. no. NG 1021)

available, probably as a representative gift to friends, family, colleagues, and – as we have seen – the authorities. Revius may have followed the example set in this regard by Caspar Sibelius. In many ways, the two men were brothers in religious arms: they studied together in Leiden, shared the same orthodox Calvinist ideas, and were fellow preachers in Deventer for many years.[39] Sibelius had himself painted by Hals in 1637, probably during a visit to his daughter and son-in-law in Bloemendaal,[40] or to Leiden, where he was involved in the critical review of the translation of the New Testament. Suyderhoef's first version of the print after Hals's original painting

39 De Bruijn 2012, pp. 201 and 210, speaks of Sibelius as Revius's 'best friend'.

40 Tydeman s.a., pp. 19–20.

dates from the same year, and a second edition was issued in 1642, five years later. It seems likely that Revius, who had just moved to Leiden at that time, was inspired by his friend Sibelius's example in having his portrait done by Hals in paint and by Suyderhoef in print, apparently on condition that he himself could keep the plate. The plate and the prints must have meant a great deal to Revius and his family. It was specifically mentioned in 1667, nine years after Revius's death, when his only surviving daughter, Theodora, finally received from the part of her father's estate that had remained undivided, 'a certain copper plate in which the effigy of her late father was cut, in order to keep it eternally and for always with her and her kin'.[41]

Revius had stated in his will that his estate was to be divided between the children of his son Richard (1617/23–1649), who had predeceased him, and those of his only surviving daughter, Theodora (1618–after 1667).[42] In a separate deed, drawn up a few days before his death, Revius stipulated that Theodora's eldest son, Carolus Bokelman (1638–1707), who was a student of theology and lived with Revius at the time, was to receive a number of his books, mainly on theology, and Revius's handwritten sermons and materials for instructing catechumens. All household goods – apart from his personal clothing in linen and wool, which was assigned to his grandsons Carolus and Jacobus Bokelman – were to be valued by official appraisers and divided among the heirs, rather than sold publicly.[43] Revius's library was sold publicly in March 1659.[44] His household goods, including paintings and prints, were divided into two lots assigned by a blind draw. The portraits and the copper plate were not, however, included in this, but remained in the common part of the estate, as mentioned above.[45] We know that some of Revius's more personal possessions were kept by his daughter Theodora and later by her son, Carolus Bokelman. It was through their descendants in the Hoogvliet family that Revius's personal copy of his *Overysselsche sangen en dichten* (1630 and 1634) was offered in 1792 to the Athenaeum Library in Deventer, where it is still treasured.[46] We do not know what happened to the portraits. It seems most likely that Theodora Revius kept them and that they followed the same line of inheritance as the manuscripts, that is, through Theodora Revius's son Carolus Bokelman, Carolus Bokelman's daughter

41 The Hague, Municipal Archives, *ONA*, inv. no. 296, fols. 160–161, notary Johannes Houttuijn, 15 December 1667.

42 Leiden, EL, *ONA*, inv. no. 447, act no. 99, notary Karel Outerman, 1 May 1654.

43 Ibid., inv. no. 898, act no. 137, 12 November 1658 and inv. no. 898, act no. 145, 2 December 1658.

44 The only existing copy of the auction catalogue of Revius's library, *Catalogus variorum & insignium librorum, praecipuè theologicorum, & miscellaneorum, viri reverendi ac piae mem. D. Jacobi Revii* [*etc.*], Leiden 1659, is in the Strahov Library of the Royal Canonry of the Premonstratensians in Prague, sign. ER XIII 38-1 (not in De Bruijn 2012). See also Leiden, EL, *ONA*, inv. no. 898, no. 149, 7 December 1658.

45 Leiden, EL, *ONA*, inv. no. 899, act 151, 19 January 1659, also acts 152 and 153, 11 December 1659.

46 De Bruijn 2012, pp. 320–321 and 503–504.

Sara (1669–1716), and Sara Bokelman's husband Daniël Hoogvliet (1679–1749), to Daniël Hoogvliet's brother Arnoldus (1687–1763), and, finally, to Arnoldus Hoogvliet's only son Johannes Hoogvliet (1737–1793).[47]

It is also possible, however, that the portraits were separated straight away, as the inventory of Tanneke Bertens, whom Revius had married in 1646 and who died in December 1669, refers to 'het conterfeijtsel vanden heer Revius sa.' ('the portrait of the late Revius') 'int groot saleth' of her house on Steenschuur in Leiden.[48] This is most likely to have been a copy of the print by Suyderhoef, but it is theoretically possible that the reference concerns the painted portrait by Hals, in which case Revius's heirs must have given it to her and contented themselves with the portrait of Christina Augustinus alone. I suggested above that the latter might be the portrait now in the National Gallery, but we cannot be sure, since the earliest provenance of that work dates from 1876. We have no trace whatsoever of Revius's portrait by Hals after 1658, or 1669 – all of Tanneke Bertens's household goods were sold publicly.[49]

In conclusion, we can state that while Protestant clergymen might not have meant very much to Frans Hals personally, they were important to him as commissioners of small, medium-sized, and large painted portraits. Given that these were contemporary public figures, their portraits – in both painted and print form – must have added considerably to Frans Hals's fame. The painted portraits of Swalmius and Revius and their respective wives played a role in their self-representation in a domestic context; they were probably kept by their descendants, but the remarriage of both preachers might have led to an early separation of the portraits of these ministers and their first wives.

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47 The municipal archives of Vlaardingen and Schiedam hold a more or less complete series of prenuptial arrangements and wills of the descendants of Theodora Revius, but, as is so often the case, the portraits are never explicitly mentioned. With special thanks to Erika Verloop, Vlaardingen, for her kind assistance.

48 Leiden, EL, *ONA* 911, act no. 181, 19 December 1669–10 March 1671.

49 Ibid., act no. 182, 12 March 1671.

2. Peeckelhaering and the Performance of Race

Christopher D.M. Atkins

Abstract: Contemporary artist Titus Kaphar, in a 2017 TED talk, asked audiences to recenter attention by acknowledging and interpreting the presence of Black figures in paintings such as Frans Hals's *Family Group in a Landscape*, now in the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza. While scholars have taken up the challenge in the works of other early modern Dutch artists, especially Rembrandt, the diverse models in the art of Frans Hals remain unexamined. This paper examines three well-known paintings by Hals that depict a man with a dark complexion, reviews past interpretations of the man as biracial, and explores the likelihood that the model was an actor performing Peeckelhaering and other roles.

Keywords: Old Master Painting, 17th century, Theatre, Actors, Models, Race, Biracial, Makeup, Frans Hals, Titus Kaphar

In his 2017 TED talk 'Can Art Amend History?', contemporary artist Titus Kaphar (b. 1976) asked audiences to recenter their attention by acknowledging and interpreting the presence of Black figures in paintings such as Frans Hals's *Family Group in a Landscape*, now in the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza (fig. 1).[1] While sharing his personal experience in art history courses that actively avoided discussions of Black people in western art, Kaphar whitewashed a copy of Hals's family group leaving only the face of the Black male visible. The performance, and the resulting painting (fig. 2), shifts the focus, our focus, and demands that viewers rethink how we see, and how we have been taught to see, images such as Hals's group portrait. Several

I thank Norbert Middelkoop for encouraging me to explore this topic. I also wish to thank Michael Zell and our students from our seminar on the global and material turns at Boston University, who spurred initial investigation of the subject of this essay. Finally, thanks are due to those who attended the January 2023 Frans Hals Symposium in Haarlem for their fruitful feedback.

1 Titus Kaphar, 'Can Art Amend History?', TED2017, 24 April 2017, Vancouver, https://www.ted.com/talks/titus_kaphar_can_art_amend_history?

N.E. Middelkoop and R.E.O. Ekkart (eds), *Frans Hals: Iconography – Technique – Reputation*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2024
DOI: 10.5117/9789048566068_CH02

Fig. 1. Frans Hals, *Family Group in a Landscape*, c. 1645–48. Canvas, 202 × 285 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza (inv. no. 179)

Fig. 2. Titus Kaphar (b. 1976), *Shifting the Gaze*, 2017. Canvas, 210.8 × 262.3 cm. © New York, Brooklyn Museum, William K. Jacobs Jr. Fund (acc. no. 2017.34)

important exhibitions in the Netherlands have sought to do just this, including *The Shifting Image of Johan Maurits*, *Black in Rembrandt's Time*, and *Slavery*.[2] While scholars have taken up the challenge in the works of other early modern Dutch artists, especially Rembrandt, the diverse models in the art of Frans Hals have only recently begun to be examined.[3] In this essay, I seek to continue that process.

Peeckelhaering

Hals's painting of a single figure in a red costume pointing to something outside the frame of the picture, now housed in Leipzig, has historically been titled *The So-Called Mulatto* (fig. 3). The history of the title given to this painting is worth

Fig. 3. Frans Hals, *Peeckelhaering*, c. 1628. Canvas, 72 × 57.5 cm. Leipzig, Museum der bildenden Künste (inv. no. 1017) | PUNCTUM B. Kober

2 Exhib. *The Shifting Image of Johan Maurits*, The Hague (Mauritshuis) 2019; Exhib. *Here: Black in Rembrandt's Time*, Amsterdam (The Rembrandt House Museum) 2020; Exhib. *Slavery*, Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum) 2021.

3 Mok and Stam 2023, p. 52-54, have argued that the Thyssen painting might depict Jacob Ruychaver and his family. Ruychaver was director general of the slave fort at Elmina, located in today's Ghana, from 1639-46 and 1650-56. Between stints in Elmina, Ruychaver was documented in Haarlem. Mok and Stam therefore suggest that Ruychaver brought the Black male from Elmina to Haarlem as a servant.

recounting. In 1889, the painting was sold in Paris by David Sellar as *Joyeux Mulâtre* ('The Merry Mulatto').[4] The title did not immediately stick as it was exhibited in 1892 in Munich as *A Laughing Man*. The designation seems to have become fixed as a result of the 1900 catalogue of Galerie Alfred Thieme in Leipzig, which had an introduction penned by the famed art historian and Hals specialist Wilhelm von Bode.[5] There, Bode mused that the sitter must have hailed from a Dutch colonial territory or foreign post, possibly from 'Java' (Indonesia). In his 1914 publication, however, Bode implicitly denied his own earlier characterization by omitting the hypothesis of a foreign origin of the sitter and attempted to alter the title by cataloguing the picture as 'the So-Called Mulatto'.[6] By 1990, Seymour Slive wrote:

> This painting is popularly, but wrongly known as the 'Mulatto'. It is probably hopeless to try to change its title now, if we consider that specialists have signalled that the picture's common name is erroneous since 1914.[7]

Slive, Claus Grimm, and others have consistently called attention to the resemblance to the painting in Kassel of *Peeckelhaering* (fig. 4).

A 1631 engraving by Jonas Suyderhoef attributes the Kassel painting as 'F. Hals pinxit' and bears the following inscription (fig. 5):

> Look at Monsieur Peeckelhaering
> He praises the brimful mug
> And is constantly occupied with the wet vessel
> Because his throat is always dry.[8]

The character's name translates literally to 'Salted Herring', suggesting a character who is perpetually thirsty and who turns to alcoholic drink to quench his thirst, often to excess.

As every scholar has agreed, the Leipzig figure wears the exact same garments as the man in Kassel and employs an equally theatrical gesture, combined with direct viewer engagement. Thus, the subject of the Leipzig painting is also Peeckelhaering. Slive's assertion that the Leipzig painting should be known primarily as a depiction of Peeckelhaering is therefore grounded in truth. It also has concomitant implications.

4 S. Slive in Cat. Exhib. Washington / London / Haarlem 1989–90, p. 220; and Heiland 1985, p. 6.

5 Von Bode 1900.

6 Von Bode and Binder 1914, p. 65.

7 S. Slive in Cat. Exhib. Washington / London / Haarlem 1989–90, p. 220.

8 'Siet Monsieur Peeckelhaering an / Hy pryst een frisse vol kan / En Hout met de vogte back / Dat doen syn keel is altyt brack.' As translated by Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, p. 39.

Fig. 4. Frans Hals, *Peeckelhaering*, c. 1628–30. Canvas, 75 × 61.5 cm. Kassel, Gemäldegalerie alte Meister, Hessen Kassel Heritage (inv. no. GK 216)

Fig. 5. Jonas Suyderhoef (1614–1686), *Peeckelhaering*, c. 1630–40. Engraving, 26.9 × 21.5 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-OB-60.667)

Focusing on a character depicted diverts consideration away from *the man* appearing as this character. The shared facial features, related complexion, and dark, curly hair suggests that the same man appears as Peeckelhaering in both paintings. As Hals painted the same figure twice, with different gestures and from different angles, suggests that Hals worked from a model, an actual person.

Peeckelhaering is a stock character in Dutch-language comedy plays, most notably Jan Zoet's *Jochem Jool, ofte Jalourschen-Pekelharing* (1637).[9] Peeckelhaering derives from Pickelhering, a clown character found in innumerable English-language plays and performances in the early seventeenth century. Pickelhering performed physical comedy and even gymnastics, often to introduce performances and scene changes. Travelling theatrical troupes from England brought the character to the European continent in the first two decades of the seventeenth century, especially Germany and the Low Countries. Quickly, Pickelhering became the single most popular character performed by the many English troupes travelling Europe.[10] Like the *commedia dell'arte* in Italy and southern Europe, English theatre troupes played a dominant role in northwestern Europe as alternatives to amateur performances by Netherlandish *rederijkers* before the professionalization of the Dutch theatre,

9 For Peeckelhaering in the Netherlands, see Weber 1987 and Buijsen 2016. For Zoet, see Cordes 2008.

10 Katritzky 2007, p. 204.

epitomized by the founding of the Amsterdam Schouwburg in 1637.[11] Already in the 1610s Gerbrand Bredero, in both a speech at the rhetoricians' chamber *The Eglantine* and in his play *Moortje*, noted that Dutch audiences frequently preferred English performers:[12]

> I prefer the English, or some other foreigners whom one hears singing and dancing so merrily that they reel and spin like a top. They fill their lines with life; our Rhetoricians speak what they have learned by heart.[13]

At least two English actors known for performing the role of Pickelhering were in the Dutch Republic in the first third of the seventeenth century. John Green headed a theatre troupe that was in the northern Netherlands between April 1620 and March 1626.[14] As part of this troupe, George Vincent is recorded as having performed the role of Pickelhering in Germany in 1615. Another member of Green's troupe, Robert Reynolds, is recorded as performing the role in 1620 in Prague. Reynolds was particularly associated with the role becoming known as 'Robert Pickelhering' and later leading a troupe known as 'Biklingherings compagnie'.[15] Reynolds settled in Utrecht and then The Hague in 1629, where he often performed locally. As a result, theatre historians have argued that Hals's paintings of Peeckelhaering depict either Vincent or Reynolds.[16] The identifications of these particular actors are intriguing but unfortunately cannot be corroborated, as no known portrait of Vincent or Reynolds exists. The underlying premise that Hals's paintings portray a specific actor in the guise of Pickelhering (or Peeckelhaering), however, is likely correct.

11 Hals's painting of a *Boy with a Skull* in the National Gallery London (inv. no. NG 6458) has often been associated with *Hamlet*. Theatre historians suggest it is an actor performing *Hamlet*, while art historians have dismissed the connection; see Katritzky 2005. More generally, Gerbrand Bredero's 1616 play *Moortje* is frequently invoked to demonstrate the presence of English actors in the Dutch Republic as several lines mention them specifically. Also in 1625, Thomas Decker wrote from London: 'We can be bankrupts on this side and gentlemen of a company beyond the sea: we burst at London, and are pieced up at Rotterdam.' Heywood in Apology for Actors mentions in Amsterdam 'a well-known company of English comedians'; see Bachrach 1970, p. 84. See also my entry on the painting in Cat. Exhib. Berlin 2024, pp. 238–239, nr. 43.

12 Hoenselaars 1999.

13 'Warent de Enghelsche, of andere uytlandtsche / Die men hoort singhen, en so lustich sien dantse / Dat sy suysebollen, en draeyen als een tol.' G.A. Bredero, *Moortje*, act 3, scene 4, lines 1458–1461, as reprinted in Bredero 1984, p. 234, as translated in Hoenselaars 1999, p. 74.

14 Katritzky 2005, p. 118.

15 Cordes 2008, pp. 62–63, and Hilton 1984, pp. 239–245.

16 Katritzky 2005, p. 119, favours identifying the figure as Vincent, while Alexander 2014, p. 117, favours Reynolds. Alternatively, Gudlaugsson 1975, p. 60, connects Hals's subject to Stefano della Bella's print portrait of the actor Carlo Cantu as Buffetto.

Fig. 6. Frans Hals, *The Merry Drinker (Il Capitano?)*, c. 1628–30. Canvas, 81 × 66.5 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. SK-A-135)

The Merry Drinker

In fact, it is worth considering if Hals may have painted this model at least three times. The painting known popularly as *The Merry Drinker*, now in the Rijksmuseum, appears to depict the same figure in different garments (fig. 6).

Viewers find comparably coloured complexions, similar eye and nose structures, related facial hair, and analogous dark curly hair radiating out from headwear. While the Leipzig, Kassel, and Rijksmuseum pictures have long been linked – as images of single figures engaged in merriment painted at around the same time, variously

the late 1620s or early 1630s – scholars have barely explored the connection. In 1989, Claus Grimm noted that they portray the same model yet spent but a single sentence on this point.[17] Slive never explicitly addressed the issue, though the photo layout in his 1970s catalogue raisonné, which positions details of the Rijksmuseum and Kassel picture side by side, suggests that he sought to elicit the comparison.[18]

Noting that the three paintings likely depict the same figure begs several questions – among them being, if the Leipzig and Kassel pictures depict a theatrical character or a model performing such a role, can the same be said for *The Merry Drinker*? The figure wears a beige, possibly leather jerkin over muted yellow-brown sleeves. White lace frames the garment at the neck and cuffs. He wears a wide-brimmed black hat at a rakish angle. A badge or medallion rests near the waist.[19] In its current label, the Rijksmuseum characterizes the figure as 'a militiaman.' Indeed, one finds related costumes worn by figures in several of Hals's civic guard group portraits, including those painted close in time to the *Merry Drinker*. However, the portraits in the civic guard groups present their subjects wearing brightly coloured sashes that mark a civic guard affiliation, a feature missing in the Rijksmuseum picture. Even more pertinently, the *Merry Drinker*'s costume resembles that of the soldiers, or more correctly the officers, that populate the guardroom scenes painted by Jacob Duck, Pieter Codde, and Jan Olis.[20] As such, *The Merry Drinker* can be identified as a figure associated with the military.

Hals famously animated his group portraits with active gestures and outward glances, but those features in *The Merry Drinker* are overly dramatic and theatrical, far more in keeping with those found in the Leipzig and Kassel paintings. As such, could the Rijksmuseum painting depict a military character from the theatre or another performance akin to Peeckelhaering? A recurrent figure in *commedia dell'arte* performances is Il Capitano, a brash military man who boasts of his military and romantic conquests. Indeed, *The Merry Drinker* bears many resemblances to Jacques Callot's 1618–20 depiction of Il Capitano (fig. 7). Alternatively, Gerbrand Adriaensz Bredero's farce *Spaanschen Brabander* (Spanish Brabanter), which was first published in 1617 and remained a favourite on Dutch stages, featured the title character Jerolimo, a rural from Brabant who puts on courtly airs associated with Spanish courtiers for comedic effect. If one interprets the medallion worn by the

17 Grimm 1990, p. 224.

18 Slive 1970–74, vol. 2, pp. 104–105.

19 Many scholars have read the image on the medallion as a bust of Prince Maurits of Orange, it strikes me as too summarily rendered to be assumed that that is the identification Hals intended. Hofstede de Groot 1910, p. 63, was the first to propose this identification. Slive 1970–74, vol. 1, p. 38, has also questioned the identification.

20 See Borger 1986 and Rosen 2010.

Fig. 7. Jacques Callot (1592–1635), *Il Capitano or L'innamorato*, c. 1618–20. Etching and engraving, 22.4 × 14.7 cm. Washington DC, National Gallery of Art, Rosenwald Collection (acc. no. 1946.21.229)

Merry Drinker as a portrait of stadtholder prince Maurits, the character played by the model might have been seen by contemporary audiences as an outmoded caricature of a military man, possibly with Counter Remonstrant sympathies.[21] In festive tone with dynamic and lively characters, literary scholars frequently compare the *Spaanschen Brabander* to the paintings of Frans Hals.[22] Might the reverse be true? Might it be that Hals sought to portray this popular character in

21 I thank Norbert Middelkoop for this observation. A comparable medal appears on Paulus Moreelse's Amsterdam civic guard piece of 1616 (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, loan City of Amsterdam, inv. no. SK-C-623).

22 See for example Brumble 1975/76, p. 660, https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_spe011197501_01/_spe011197501_01_0055.php.

paint? Indeed, Bredero's plays provided inspiration to at least two other painters associated with Haarlem: Jan Miense Molenaer and Jan Steen.[23]

As with the depictions of Peeckelhaering, the *Merry Drinker* portrays a model who was a real person even if he is pictured performing a role. Given that the Kassel and Leipzig paintings picture a theatrical character, it is worth considering that Hals might have painted an actor and that Hals painted him in two separate roles.

Race and performance

Let us return to issues of race and racial identity. The late nineteenth-century designation of the man in the Leipzig picture as a biracial individual, endorsed and repeated initially by Bode, rests on perceived difference from the majority of Hals's sitters. Bode was not wrong in his recognition of difference. The skin tones Hals painted deviate from those used for the majority of those he painted. Hals used deep browns and richer reds to craft a complexion that is more brown or olive than pink or white. The painting in Kassel has even more black to mark the contours of the cheekbone and shadow on the forehead. Hals often pictured ruddy complexions, exposing reddish pinks at the cheeks in paintings, but those skin tones are not the same as those found in the Leipzig, Kassel, and Rijksmuseum pictures. Similarly, the dark curly hair that is most noticeable in the Kassel painting is distinctive in Hals's oeuvre. Likewise, one finds few other instances of figures with similar complexions in seventeenth-century Dutch art as a whole.

Bode and Sellar labelled the distinctive appearance of the man in the Leipzig picture as multiracial. Though Slive and others have questioned this designation, it is worth considering the potential racial identity with Kaphar's call to see beyond whiteness and address racial diversity in mind. As such, is it possible that Hals's model was biracial, as Bode and Sellar claimed?

The best-known biracial figure to scholars of Dutch art today is Albert Eckhout's 1641 ethnographic portrait now in Copenhagen (fig. 8). In the series of eight paintings based on Eckhout's experience in Dutch-controlled Brazil, one painting is dedicated to a man of both Black and white ancestry. Eckhout painted his subject with olive-brown skin, a dense mass of curly hair, and goatee. These are all features not entirely dissimilar to those of the man in the paintings by Hals under investigation here. Eckhout's figure was identified as biracial shortly after the painting was made according to an inscribed watercolour copy by Zacharias Wagner from about 1641. Wagner wrote:

23 Molenaer painted scenes from Bredero's 1615 play *Lucelle* on four occasions; see D. Weller in Cat. Exhib. Raleigh / Manchester 2003, pp. 153–155. Steen also depicted a scene from this play in his *Ascagnes and Lucelle* from 1667, now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC (acc. no. 2014.136.45).

Fig. 8. Albert Eckhout (c. 1610–1665), *Portrait of a Mulatto*, c. 1641–43. Canvas, 274 × 170 cm. Copenhagen, National Museum of Denmark (inv. no. 25539)

The people produced by relations between black women and Portuguese are called 'Mulaten' and like other slaves, they are condemned to spend their lives in the worst bondage. Yet there are some who are more fortunate, who are allowed freedom thanks to the love of their lascivious fathers [... who] buy him for a goodly sum [...] and then the child moves from slavery to freedom. Once fully grown, they are greatly used for all sort of military action and know how to handle all types of guns, especially shotguns.[24]

24 Parker Brienen 2006, p. 159.

Fig. 9. Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), *Head Studies*, c. 1617–18. Panel, 48.3 × 67.2 cm. Private collection

In analysing Eckhout's painting and Wagner's inscription, Rebecca Parker Brienan explored the use of the term *mulatto* in early modern Dutch sources, noting that its usage dates back to the sixteenth century.[25] Like Wagner, Parker Brienan connected multiracial people to Portuguese colonizers, whom scholars believe to have been the most enthusiastic European embracers of miscegenation.

In the 2013 exhibition at the Frans Hals Museum, Anna Tummers connected Hals's paintings of Peeckelhaering with Peter Paul Rubens's sketch of a man that Julius Held labelled 'a Levantine', a designation with little specificity to it (fig. 9).[26] In this picture from around 1615, Rubens pictured a brown-skinned man with black curly hair and a dark goatee, presumably modelled from life. In many ways, the picture recalls Hals's later pictures. This unidentified man may have been a sailor, or perhaps someone transported by Portuguese merchants for any of numerous possible reasons into the bustling port of Antwerp. It seems unlikely that Hals had in mind that he was painting the same figure Rubens pictured. However, it is possible that Rubens's example could have inspired Hals to seek out a model of colour later in life.

25 Ibid., p. 155.

26 J. Hillegers in Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 2013, p. 101; and Held 1980, vol. 1, pp. 612–613.

There is mounting evidence of biracial individuals living in the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century. Recent research on the Jewish cemetery in Amsterdam, Beth Haim, found that fifteen Black people and 'mulattos' were buried there between 1614 and 1648.[27] In various burial records, 'mulattos' are mentioned specifically, even if they are connected to African immigrants and afforded the same restricted rights. Reversing earlier practice that non-white Jews could only be buried outside the cemetery; regulations were revised in 1647 so that Black people born Jewish or who married *brancos* (whites) could be buried inside the cemetery gates. This stands as evidence that marriage between white and Black Jews occurred, and was sanctioned.[28]

There is much more research to be done into the diverse communities in Amsterdam and elsewhere in the Dutch Republic in the early seventeenth century, but it is entirely possible that Hals had direct contact with a biracial individual. Hals had connections and work in nearby Amsterdam in the early 1630s, if not before. Indeed, Bas Dudok van Heel has argued that Hals worked for the Amsterdam dealer Hendrick Uylenburgh, who maintained a residence and studio at the corner of Breestraat and Zwanenburgwal, as Rembrandt did.[29] The street, today's Jodenbreestraat, was in the heart of the neighbourhood where so many of the immigrant Jews from Portugal lived, some of whom brought with them servants and enslaved people from Africa, and the small community of residents from Africa that Mark Ponte has illuminated recently.[30] As such, Hals was not only in Amsterdam, but in neighbourhoods where he easily could have seen and encountered myriad people of diverse backgrounds.

More research is needed, but it is not out of the realm of possibility that individuals and/or communities of Africans and other minority groups also immigrated to Haarlem. The population of the city doubled in size in the first decades of the seventeenth century. Indeed, in addition to the young man in the Thyssen family group, the youth that modelled for the now lost painting of a fisherboy by Hals may be another based on the colouring in the mezzotint and painted copies (fig. 10).[31]

In either Haarlem or Amsterdam, it is worth exploring the presence of non-white performers in Dutch theatre performances, companies, and troupes. Matthieu Chapman has argued for the appearance of not only Black characters, but Black actors on the stages of early modern London.[32] Most famously, opportunities for actors of colour occurred in the work of William Shakespeare as Aaron in *Titus*

27 D. Hondius 2008, p. 93; and Hagoort 1997, p. 38.
28 Hondius 2008, p. 95.
29 Dudok van Heel 2006, p. 116.
30 See Zell 2023 and Ponte 2020.
31 I thank Norbert Middelkoop for making this connection; see Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, p. 119 and plate 79.
32 Chapman 2014.

Fig. 10. Copy after Frans Hals, *Laughing Fisherboy*. Canvas, 80 × 65 cm. Present whereabouts unknown

Andronicus and the title character in *Othello.* Between 1587 and 1642 there are more than a hundred named speaking roles for Black people in English-language plays.[33] Thanks to the prevalence of English theatre troupes such as those of Green and Reynolds in the northern Netherlands, many of these plays were performed for Dutch audiences.[34]

Early seventeenth-century Dutch-language plays are rarer and more difficult to trace. Nonetheless, Bredero's *Moortje* of 1616, which centres on a comedic love triangle, features a plot line wherein a suitor seeks to win the love of the

33 Ibid., p. 86.

34 Leek, 1972, pp. 1–15. In addition, Leek notes here that an English theatre was housed on the Doelen Achtergracht in Leiden by 1638 (p. 5).

female protagonist with the gift of an enslaved person, the 'moor' of the title. In 1621, Adriaen van den Bergh published a Dutch translation of *Titus Andronicus*. Not long after, in 1638, Jan Vos penned *Aran en Titus, of wraak en weerwraak*, a reworked version of Shakespeare's play. Vos's play was performed more than one hundred times in the Amsterdam theatre and was printed in 34 editions, making it the most popular play produced in the Dutch Republic.[35] It is worth noting that Vos centred the Black character Aran in the title, and retained the plot line where Aran fathered a child with a white woman and subsequently had it murdered as it was biracial. These various characters stereotyped people of colour as, among other things, prone to drunkenness and excessive laughter or presented as comedic figures who were to be laughed at and ridiculed. These features are not unrelated to Hals's presentation of Peeckelhaering, and possibly the *Merry Drinker*.

Many English theatre companies employed Black people to perform the roles of non-white characters, and it was prestigious to be able to do so.[36] It remains uncertain if Black actors were members of the English troupes that toured the Low Countries or if there were opportunities for actors of colour on Dutch stages, more generally. Documentation on actors before the opening of the Amsterdam Schouwburg is scarce. The paucity of information is magnified by the fact that the travelling theatre troupes were largely itinerant, only moderately financially successful, and operated at the margins of society as a result.

As European actors frequently altered their appearance to better embody their roles it is possible that white actors performed the roles of non-white characters.[37] As part of this, it was common practice for actors to darken their faces. The 1629 broadsheet advertising an upcoming staging of *Schampatas*, a Pickelhering-type comedy, depicts three figures from the performance with distinctively dark faces (fig. 11). The actor in the centre in Pieter Codde's 1636 theatrical scene wears a brown-tinted mask (fig. 12).

There is ample evidence that early modern European actors also utilized makeup to alter skin colour and complexions. Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness*, composed at the request of Anne of Denmark and performed at Whitehall Palace in London in 1605 (later published in 1608), had the ladies of the court appear in blackface makeup. Jonson's later masque, *Gypsies Metamorphosed*, performed first in 1621 and published in 1641, featured performers in brownface who appear as gypsies, only to be transformed into English white characters later in the performance.

35 Helmers 2016, p. 345.

36 Chapman 2014, p. 86, n. 32.

37 Hornback 2007. For the broader history of theatrical techniques for achieving the effect of blackness, including masks, garments, and makeup, see Vaughan 2005.

Fig. 11. Schampatas (Jean Potage / John Posset), *Der liestigen Buhler Spießgeselle*, 1629. Broadsheet, 36 × 26 cm. London, © The British Library Board (inv. no. 1750.b.29.118)

Fig. 12. Pieter Codde (1599–1678), *Merry Company with Masked Dancers*, 1636. Panel, 50 × 76.5 cm. The Hague, Mauritshuis (inv. no. 392)

Jan Nicolaisen has posited that the Leipzig Peeckelhaering depicts a figure wearing browning makeup.[38] As he points out, the skin at the figure's neck is a different, lighter shade than it is on the cheeks and forehead. Similarly, the left hand of the Merry Drinker is a lighter, peachier tone that is at odds with the colouring of the figure's face. With common theatre practices in mind, it is entirely plausible that the figures in the Leipzig, Amsterdam, and Kassel paintings do not depict people of colour, but actors performing roles in makeup.

Conclusion

A common refrain today is the lack of works of art that register the diversity of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. Are we sure that these works of art do not exist – that our galleries, storerooms, and depots do not hold these objects already and that we have not looked for them, or not seen them? The case I have tried to make for Hals here suggests just that. Even now, we as a field have not seen them or, conversely, not interpreted them as people of colour or people performing as people of colour. Hals's art registers diversity in other ways, too, as shown by the

38 Nicolaisen 2012, p. 133.

Fig. 13. Frans Hals, *Banquet of the officers of the St. George Civic Guard*, 1627 (detail). Canvas, 179 x 257.5 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. OS I-110)

Black servant in the Thyssen painting that Kaphar points out, the representation of what we would call mental illness today in his painting of Barbara Claesdr, known popularly as *Malle Babbe* (see p. 132, fig. 2), and the depiction of Nicolaes le Febure, a person of restricted growth, in the 1627 *Banquet of the Officers of the St. George Civic Guard* (fig. 13). I would say that these pictures have been hiding in plain sight, but that phrasing puts the agency on the objects, not on us. As Kaphar so eloquently articulated, this is a story about us, too – how we see, how we interpret, and what stories we put forward.

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3. Painted Stitches: Embroidery and the Paintings of Frans Hals

Marike van Roon

Abstract: Frans Hals's portraits illustrate the development of embroidery in fashion, especially in the 1620s and 1630s. They show the opulence of this embroidery to its fullest effect. While virtually no garments have survived, examples of similar embroidery still exist, mainly in the form of decorated bindings for bibles and songbooks for young women. These book bindings allow every stitch in Frans Hals's portraits to be identified, despite the artist's rather impressionistic style.

Keywords: Old Master Painting, 17th century, Haarlem, Textile Art, Fashion, Embroidery, Embroidered Bindings, Bodices, Doublets, Belts, Bandoliers

The city of Haarlem flourished from the Reformation onwards. Between 1573 and 1622, its population grew from 18,000 to 40,000 and the city became the third largest in Holland, after Amsterdam and Leiden.[1] This growth was largely due to immigrants from Flanders and Brabant, but also from other parts of Europe where religious conflicts had led to war or repression. Among them were merchants and craftsmen who took their knowledge and experience to their new hometowns. Frans Hals was one of these immigrants, as his parents settled in Haarlem when he was just a few years old. But the old elite also fared well. The Haarlem beer brewers had discovered new markets in North Holland and Friesland and around 1625 there were dozens of breweries in the city. This new generation of wealthy merchants and manufacturers was self-confident and fashion-conscious. Thanks to the thriving silk trade and a new generation of Haarlem (and Amsterdam) silk manufacturers, they were able to acquire very fine clothes. New styles were quickly adopted by both men and women.[2] A considerable number of Haarlem residents

1 Mulder 1995.

2 On costume in the time of Frans Hals, see Du Mortier 1989; Kruseman 2018; and Kruseman and Bos 2022.

N.E. Middelkoop and R.E.O. Ekkart (eds), *Frans Hals: Iconography – Technique – Reputation*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2024
DOI: 10.5117/9789048566068_CH03

ordered portraits of themselves in their finest, most richly embroidered clothing from the man who had become the city's most fashionable painter: Frans Hals.

Haarlem and the embroidery industry

We know very little about the embroidery industry in Haarlem. As in most cities, the embroiderers were affiliated to the Guild of St Luke. Established in 1505, this guild represented a wide range of crafts: painters, sculptors, goldsmiths, glaziers, jug makers, tinkers, potters, copper casters, printers, coppersmiths, tin workers, plumbers, organ makers, slate workers, lantern makers, second-hand clothes dealers, and embroiderers.[3] The archives of the Haarlem Guild of St Luke, which have only partially survived, mention the number of affiliated embroiderers only once, in 1634. There were thirteen of them, although unfortunately their names are not mentioned. Their professional group was the eighth largest in the guild and was amply surpassed by the painters, including Frans Hals. The embroiderers belonged to a subordinate class in the Haarlem guild and did not command a seat on the board.

Although the picture is very incomplete, sufficient information can be found in the archives of the major cities to allow statements to be made regarding the origin, growth, flourishing, and decline of the embroidery industry in the Dutch Republic. Figures show that the art of embroidery flourished from 1590 to 1660, especially from 1610 to 1640.[4] Many embroiderers were immigrants. The craft probably reached its peak in Haarlem around 1634. Amsterdam, Delft, and The Hague housed more embroiderers – as many as 30 at a time in each city – but in nearby Alkmaar only two embroiderers are found at the end of the 1620s. From 1640 onwards, the number of newly registered names fell by 50 per cent in each decade in all cities of the Republic. After 1660 no more than a few embroiderers per city can be found.

Dress code

Although black clothing has long been seen as quintessentially Calvinist, this is only partly true. In the sixteenth century, in fact, the colour was already the main fashion at the thoroughly Roman-Catholic Spanish court. The elite liked to dress in black, not first and foremost as a symbol of austerity, but as a sign of wealth, as the dyeing process was difficult and expensive. Colourful clothing was found in the Netherlands,

3 Miedema 1980.

4 Van Roon 2023.

Fig. 1. Frans Hals, *Banquet of the Officers of the St. George Civic Guard*, 1616 (detail with the standard bearer Jacob Cornelisz Schout). Canvas, 175 × 234 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. OS I-109)

but its use was restricted by both explicit and unwritten rules and determined by religion, age, status, and gender. Frans Hals portrayed them all: Baptists, Calvinists, and Catholics; children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly; merchants, manufacturers, and regents; men and women. He knew all the subtle differences in clothing.

In addition to the common people, children were permitted to wear colourful clothes. Bright colours were also considered suitable for young, unmarried men and for the military. In Hals's 1616 group portrait of the *Banquet of the Officers of the St George Civic Guard*, for instance, everyone is dressed in black except for the young, unmarried, beardless standard-bearer on the left, who wears a green doublet (fig. 1). Young men were allowed to show off. Black clothing was for serious, status-conscious adults, whose outfit could be enlivened with a bright white lace collar or ruff and cuffs and with lavish embroidery. Baptists limited themselves to narrow, modest cuffs and collars without decorations, but Catholics and Calvinists felt free to dress

more flamboyantly, although there were rules and customs as to where embroidery should be applied.[5] Both sexes wore embroidered sleeves, especially in the early 1600s, but from 1620 onwards embroidery was mainly applied to women's bodices and gloves and to men's belts. Members of the civic guard wore belts with decorated scabbards, whereas the officers could wear a heavily embroidered bandolier.

Gold embroidery

Until the mid-sixteenth century, gold embroidery was mainly used at court and in the church. In the second half of the century, however, the decorative technique was adopted by manufacturers and embraced by wealthy families, including those from the Netherlands. The change was influenced by the invention of drawn gold wire. Using a draw-plate – a steel plate with holes of decreasing size – a uniform wire could be drawn, to less than a fifth of a millimetre in diameter, and with a much higher volume of production than the earlier membrane wire.[6] The round metal wire could be flattened and shaped into a strip. Twisted around a silk core it formed a flexible and strong thread called 'passing', which was always couched over a background and secured with silk yarn. A narrow spiral could also be made from drawn and flattened wire. This spiral (bullion or purl) was cut into small pieces and often placed like parallel ribs over a slight elevation of linen stitches. The rounded elevation created a more vibrant sheen. Glittering spangles were likewise formed from small, flattened circles of drawn metal wire and then sprinkled among the embroidery.

The wire-drawing technique was developed in Nuremberg, the European gold city *par excellence*, and spread throughout the continent in the sixteenth century. Drawn wire and its derivatives – passing, purl, and spangles – were imported into the Republic until the early seventeenth century, after which wire-drawers established themselves in all the Dutch cities.

Opulent bodices

The earliest paintings by Frans Hals showing embroidery include the portraits of the lawyer Paulus van Beresteyn and his third wife, Catharina Both van Eem, who issued their wedding banns in December 1619, and of the grain merchant Isaac Massa from 1622 (figs. 2–4). The men wear the narrow sleeves that were popular well into the 1620s. They are made in both cases of black satin and decorated with

5 On Baptist clothing, see Grijzenhout 2013.

6 Higgins 1993, p. 43.

Fig. 2. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Paulus Arentsz van Beresteyn*, c. 1619. Canvas, 139.5 × 102.5 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (inv. no. RF 424)

a repeating pattern of gold embroidery, in which pomegranates are incorporated. The embroidery consists of simple couched passing, with no purl or spangles. Not so the spectacularly embroidered bodice of Catharina Both van Eem, in which all the techniques of gold thread embroidery can be found: tendrils of couched passing; petals and leaves covered with parallel pieces of purl; couched-over small elevations; and the space in between decorated with spangles and small pieces of purl.

Fig. 3. Frans Hals and Pieter Soutman (?), *Portrait of Catharina Both van der Eem*, c. 1619–20. Canvas, 139 × 102 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (inv. no. RF 425)

Fig. 4. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Isaac Massa*, 1622. Canvas, 107 × 85 cm. Chatsworth, the Devonshire Collection

The short bodice or *borst* that Catharina wears was common to every lady of standing.[7] Bodices like this are only decorated on the front, protrude at the bottom or have a peplum, and are often edged with lobes. The midline can be accentuated with gimp or buttons. Most bodices we know from portraits are *trouwborsten* – precious garments made on the occasion of a wedding, but worn for a long time afterwards. Not a single gold-embroidered bodice has been preserved, which is not surprising given that when clothes wore out or went out of fashion, their valuable materials were reused: a fate suffered by a great deal of embroidery.

Although no gold-embroidered bodices have survived, a few examples of similar embroidery are known, such as the one on the binding of Anna Steyn's songbook from 1611 (fig. 5). Anna, who preceded Catharina as the wife of Paulus van Beresteyn, received the album from Paulus's cousin Cornelis.[8] It is clear from the poems it contains and the embroidered arrow-pierced heart on the front that Cornelis van Beresteyn loved Anna. The album was probably a parting gift, since Anna married Paulus van Beresteyn instead, in January 1618, less than a year after Paulus's first wife had died. This marriage, too, was destined to be short-lived, as Anna died as early as October.[9] The binding features typical seventeenth-century embroidery: contours of twined passing, small leaves filled with purl over a raised ground and sprinkled with spangles and small pieces of purl.

The bodice of Aletta Hanemans, as depicted in her 1625 portrait by Frans Hals, shows equally rich embroidery with glittering spangles, but is of a different character

7 Kruseman and Bos 2022.

8 Van Thiel 2003; Leerintveld 2012.

9 On Paulus van Beresteyn's marriages, see Wildeman 1900, p. 135.

Fig. 5. *Songbook of Anna Steyn* (the back, with monogram), 1611. Silk velvet, silk, gold and silver thread, 15.5 × 20.5 cm. The Hague, National Library of the Netherlands (inv. no. KW 79 J 30)

(fig. 6). Here it is flat and refined, with long graceful lines and a lavish border of flowers, a centre line and edges of gold gimp. Gimp like this in rep weave was used at the time to decorate all kinds of accessories. The elderly Anna van der Aar, portrayed by Frans Hals in 1626, also wears a bodice with flat gold embroidery, depicting elegant tendrils and mirrored scrollwork (fig. 7). The bodice is undoubtedly earlier and the decoration is similar to that of the binding of Juliana van Roussel's *Album amicorum*, first used in 1616 (fig. 8). These compositions are derived from ornament prints, which influenced the decoration of numerous objects.

Fig. 6. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Aletta Hanemans*, 1625. Canvas, 124.8 × 98.2 cm. The Hague, Mauritshuis (inv. no. 460)

Fig. 7. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Anna van der Aar* (detail), c. 1626. Panel, 22.2 × 16.5 cm. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, The H.O. Havemeyer Collection (acc. no. 29.100.9)

A fourth bodice depicted by Frans Hals can be seen in the portrait of Maria Larp, wife of the Haarlem silk-dyer Pieter Tjarck, which was painted after their wedding in 1634 (fig. 9). It shows the more lavish style of the 1620s and 1630s, with a high and complex relief covered in gold passing or purl. This relief was created by applying layer upon layer of linen stitches or by modelling and attaching bundles of linen

Fig. 8. *Album amicorum of Juliana van Roussel* (the back), c. 1616. Silk satin, silver thread, 12 × 18 cm. The Hague, National Library of The Netherlands (inv. no. KW 79 J 50)

Fig. 9. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Maria Larp*, c. 1635. Canvas, 83.4 × 68.1 cm. London, National Gallery, presented by the Misses Rachel F. and Jean I. Alexander, 1972 (inv. no. NG 6413)

thread. The embroidery of the bird in Larp's portrait is comparable to that of a dolphin on yet another bookbinding, containing a bible printed in Amsterdam in 1621 (fig. 10). This embroidery is very worn, which reveals the underlying technique: a bundle of linen threads was modelled into the body of the dolphin and attached with linen cords as ribs, over which silver thread was then attached.

Fig. 10. *Bookbinding with dolphin*, c. 1621–30. Silk velvet, silk, gold and silver thread, 17.5 × 10 cm. Amsterdam, Allard Pierson, Band 1 H 4

The use of rows of gold buttons, as can be seen on Maria Larp's bodice, was very fashionable. They are described by Maria van Nesse, a wealthy, unmarried woman from Alkmaar, in her memorial book.[10] In 1632, she sold the buttons from the bodices of her deceased half-sister Elisabeth van Alckemade: 'Aechtte Boecke has sold for me 3 dozen silver buttons, which will be used for a riding jacket for Jan. They came from my sister Van Alckemade's bodice [...] I gave Aechtte Boecke 6 dozen gold buttons, which came from the bodices of my sister Van Alckemade.'[11] Three dozen buttons per bodice roughly corresponds with the number found on that of Maria Larp.

In the first decades of the seventeenth century, women of distinction often wore gold-embroidered bodices, while their male counterparts wore narrow gold or black-embroidered belts. There are no surviving examples, but embroidered belts of this kind can be seen in almost every portrait, especially those showing a civic guard group, as in Frans Hals's 1616 painting of the St George Civic Guard (fig. 1). The style of embroidery corresponds exactly with that used on the previously mentioned bodices and bookbindings.

Coloured details

Picturesque silk embroidery can be used to 'illuminate' gold embroidery. Colourful details were mainly applied to accessories, such as gloves. The portrait of Aletta Hanemans shows a striking difference between the embroidery of her bodice and that of her gloves (fig. 11). The scalloped caps show a composition of fine tendrils of gold and silver thread and pearls, interspersed with colourful birds and flowers. The birds symbolize the virtuous traits of a married woman. The parakeet, with its curved beak and long tail, represents the ability to learn, while the white dove stands for simplicity. The decoration on these bridal gloves is similar to that on a pair of gloves in the Six Collection in Amsterdam (fig. 12), which feature very fine and detailed silk embroidery.

Although small, colourful details were widely used in embroidery, the decoration of the fashionable doublet of the so-called *Laughing Cavalier* by Frans Hals from 1624 is exceptional in many aspects (fig. 13). While the raised gold embroidery interspersed with spangles is familiar, the abundance of colourful silk embroidery is

10 Noorman and Van der Maal 2022.

11 Author's translation: 'Aechtte Boecke heeft 3 dosijn silferen knopen voer mijn verkoft, die joffrou Koetenbuirch aen een rijrocke voer Jan setten sal, voer 1-4-0 die 3 dosijn. Sij hadden aen een borst van suster Van Alckemade gestaen. [...] Aechtte Boecke heeft 6 dosijn gouwen knopen van mijn gehadt, die van suster Van Alckemade haer borsten gekomen waren'. *Memorieboek van Maria van Nesse, 1623–1646*, fol. 15v and 21v. Transcriptiewerkgroep Regionaal Archief Alkmaar, November 2022. https://www.regionaalarchiefalkmaar.nl/mariavannesse

Fig. 11. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Aletta Hanemans* (detail of fig. 6), 1625

Fig. 12. *Cap of Glove.* Silk satin, silk, gold and silver thread, pearls. Amsterdam, Six Collection

unique, as is the overall symbolism. The ornaments are all related to love: Mercury's rod and helmet, winged bows and arrows, flies swarming around flaming torches, tongues of fire, love knots, obelisks, sunbeams, and bolts of lightning.[12] The motifs are drawn from emblem books and relate to the joys and pains of love and the

Fig. 13. Frans Hals, *The Laughing Cavalier (possibly the portrait of Tieleman Roosterman)*, 1624. Canvas, 83 × 67.3 cm. London, The Wallace Collection (inv. no. P84)

12 L. Packer in Packer and Roy 2021, pp. 37–57.

Fig. 14. *Songbook of Anna Steyn* (the front, with a silver heart pierced by arrows), 1611. Silk velvet, silk, gold and silver thread, 15.5 × 20.5 cm. The Hague, National Library of the Netherlands (inv. no. KW 79 J 30)

qualities necessary for success in love. We rarely see examples like this on Dutch clothing, but we do sometimes find them on accessories, such as wedding gloves or albums and songbooks belonging to young women (fig. 14).

Whereas these books celebrate the (fatal) attractiveness of a young unmarried woman, the decorated doublet of our cavalier expresses the love and fortitude of a young unmarried man. As has been suggested recently, he might represent the wealthy cloth merchant Tieleman Roosterman.[13] Since Roosterman did not marry until 1631, he was still a bachelor in 1624, which does indeed make him a suitable candidate.

Cord embroidery

A second type of embroidery that became very popular in the 1620s and 1630s is the cord technique. It derived from gold embroidery, but used shiny, twisted silk cords instead of passing, silk floss (loosely twisted thread) instead of purl, and knotted stitches instead of spangles. While this type of embroidery could be executed in any colour, it became immensely popular in black-on-black silk. The most detailed example can be seen in Frans Hals's *Portrait of Willem van Heythuysen* from around 1625 (fig. 15). His doublet and breeches are entirely embroidered with tendrils, flowers, and birds, which are only visible due to the difference in relief

13 Biesboer 2012.

Fig. 15. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Willem Heythuysen*, c. 1625. Canvas, 204.5 × 134.5 cm. Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek (inv. no. 14101)

Fig. 16. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Unknown Young Woman*, 1634. Canvas, 111.1 × 82.2 cm. Baltimore, Baltimore Museum of Art (acc. no. 1951.107)

and sheen. Frans Hals, who was a master of black in his paintings, sometimes gives a clearer impression of this embroidery than would have been possible in real life. His mastery is evident in the portrait of an unknown young woman, dated 1634 (fig. 16). The couched cords give an intense black impression, while the embossed motifs, such as carnations, roses, and birds, gleam on every curve. Small dots and stripes have been applied between the customary tendrils, which break through the gloss of the satin.

Given the wealth of the people portrayed, the high price of gold and silver will not have been the motivation for choosing black: black on black was simply the height of fashion. The Fries Museum in Leeuwarden has a surviving example of (part of) a black bodice, executed in this technique (fig. 17). It demonstrates not only the impressive skill of the embroiderer, but also the importance of intense blackness and sheen, affected in this instance by the passage of time.

Embroidery and the paintings of Frans Hals

Many portraits are known of the Dutch elite from the first half of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, Frans Hals's portraits differ from those of other painters in prosperous cities such as Amsterdam, Leiden, and Delft, partly because of

Fig. 17. *Bodice*, c. 1620–40. Embroidered silk. Leeuwarden, Fries Museum (inv. no. T06495)

his quality as a painter, but also because of the people he portrayed. There are numerous portraits of women with richly woven or embroidered bodices, but men in spectacularly embroidered clothing are much more unusual. The young generation of wealthy merchants and manufacturers in Haarlem appear more confident, fashionable, and colourful than those in other cities, an impression that was effectively documented by Frans Hals.

The realism of Hals's paintings is impressive: although his style is rather impressionistic, every stitch in his portraits can be identified if you know what stitches were used at the time. His painted embroidery is much more realistic than that found, for instance, in the detailed portraits by his contemporary Nicolaes Eliasz Pickenoy, who was active in nearby Amsterdam. The few examples of embroidery that still exist prove that what Hals painted really existed and was representative of the fashion of the time. It is safe to assume that the clothes were really worn, even the more fabulous ones, such as the Laughing Cavalier's doublet.

Embroidery gradually fell out of favour in the 1640s, as can be seen in Hals's portrait of Isabella Coymans from the second half of that decade (p. 88, fig. 8).[14] The fabric of her dress – plain satin – shows how fashion was changing. Embroidery as decoration was replaced by ribbons and lace made of gold and silver thread. A new generation of painters would specialize in the rendering of glossy satin.

About the author

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14 Du Mortier 1989, p. 52; S. Slive in Cat. Exhib. Washington / London / Haarlem 1989–90, pp. 322–325, no. 69.

4. More than Decoration: The Map in Frans Hals's *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital**

Liesbeth Abraham and Koos Levy-van Halm

Abstract: This paper discusses the map on the wall in Frans Hals's *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital* of 1640–41. The first part identifies it as an existing map of Flanders, published in 1633, while the second part explores its presence in the regents' room with reference to the special relationship between the hospital and Stadtholder Fredrik Hendrik's States army, which was still active in Flanders at the time.

Keywords: Old Master Painting, 17th century, Haarlem, Portraiture, Cartography, Map of Flanders, Gerardus Mercator, Henricus Hondius, Alexander Serhanders, Vivianite

I

During the conservation treatment of Hals's *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital*, completed in 2015, the map depicted in the background became a subject of special interest (fig. 1). Although large and prominently placed on the wall behind the five regents, the map has long been overlooked. Surprisingly little has been written concerning its presence. Descriptions of the painting sometimes mention the map, but more often ignore it. The depicted region has rarely been identified.

Hals initially planned a curtain in the top left corner, several broad brushstrokes indicating the folds of which are visible in infrared light. Early in the painting process, however, Hals abandoned the curtain and replaced it with the intriguing wall map. As maps were widely available and very popular in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, to find one on the wall of a regents' room would not have been unusual.[1]

* Part I of this essay was written by Liesbeth Abraham. Part II was written by Koos Levy-van Halm.

1 For more information on the study and restoration of *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital, Regents of the Old Men's Almshouse, Regentesses of the Old Men's Almshouse*, see the essays elsewhere in this volume (pp. 171–182 and 182–192).

N.E. Middelkoop and R.E.O. Ekkart (eds), *Frans Hals: Iconography – Technique – Reputation*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2024
DOI: 10.5117/9789048566068_CH04

Fig. 1. Frans Hals, *The Regents of St. Elisabeth's Hospital*, 1640–41 (after treatment). Canvas, 153 × 252 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. OS I-114). Photograph: René Gerritsen, Kunst- en Onderzoeksfotografie

Gerrit Gratama, director of the Frans Hals Museum from 1912 to 1941, seems to have been the first to identify the map as one of Flanders. After the restorer Derix de Wild had cleaned the painting in 1918, he wrote: 'In the background a ray of light emerged, and the map hanging there turned out to be one of Flanders. Probably taken by Hals, who repeatedly signs himself "van Antwerpen", from his workshop or home, to fill the background. There is no relationship between the regents of the hospital, who had no connection with Flanders, and the map.'[2] This identification seems to have gone unnoticed: in 1924 Schmidt Degener wrongly described it as a vague map of the coastline of Holland. Six years later, in 1930, Dülberg mistook it for a map of Haarlem.[3]

In 1943, Gratama added more information on the depicted region and repeated his suggestion that Hals's motives for including the map were personal: 'A map hangs on the rear wall to fill the emptiness of the background. It shows Flanders

2 Gratama 1918, p. 250, n. 1: 'Op den achtergrond kwam een lichtstraal tevoorschijn, en bleek de kaart, daar opgehangen, er een van Vlaanderen te zijn. Waarschijnlijk door Hals, die zich steeds "van Antwerpen" teekende, uit zijn atelier of woning gehaald, om den achtergrond mee te vullen. Tusschen de Regenten van het gasthuis, die niets uit te staan hadden met Vlaanderen, en de kaart bestaat geen verband.'

3 Schmidt Degener 1924, p. 21: 'In een sober verlicht vertrek, op welks effen wand een vage landkaart van de glooiende kustlijn van Holland aanduidt, houdt een vijftal Regenten ernstig overleg'; Dülberg 1930, p. 165: 'In einem Raum, der von Links her streifiges Licht empfängt und den eine Karte von Haarlem, die schon auf den Landkartenprunk des Delfter Vermeer vordeutet, belebt, (...).'.

and part of the isles of Zeeland with the Scheldt. It most likely belonged to the painter, who was, after all, born in Flanders; the gentlemen from Haarlem had nothing to do with that region.[4] Three years later, Thomas Luns also mentioned the 'large map of Flanders' in his description of the painting, after which the map was hardly mentioned again, and the identification of Flanders seems to have been completely forgotten.[5] For anyone familiar with the shape of Flanders the map is not hard to recognize, certainly when one keeps in mind that the North South axis is not orientated vertically, but along the horizon with a narrow strip of sea at the top. The north is depicted on the right, the south on the left.

Mercator's map and its legacy

The first accurate and reliable map of Flanders was made in 1540 by the influential Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator (1512–1594). It became one of his most popular early maps and was copied many times by Flemish and foreign engravers for decades to come.

The introduction of copper engraving in cartography in the 1530s changed the appearance of maps. The Gothic capitals used for woodcuts were replaced by the graceful letters of the Roman 'chancery' italic style and artistic methods such as stippling were used to render land and sea. There were also important practical advantages: engraving allowed for quick corrections and revisions that were barely discernible. A copper plate could also be reused readily and quickly, something that was not possible with woodcuts.[6]

With a solid background in geography, astronomy, and mathematics and immense practical skills, Mercator became extremely influential and had a powerful impact on cartography. He excelled as an engraver and was praised for taking 'the art of copper-plate map engraving to unparalleled heights of beauty and sophistication'.[7]

The development of copper-plate engraving and the growing printing industry made maps widely available in Northern Europe. Whereas the Portuguese and Spanish attempted to limit the circulation of their maps, which were always hand-drawn rather than printed, Flemish mapmakers like Mercator sold maps on the open market to anyone who could afford them. It was the Dutch who turned this

4 Gratama 1943, p. 42: 'Op den achterwand hangt een kaart om de leegheid van den fond te breken. Deze geeft Vlaanderen en een deel van de Zeeuwse eilanden met de Schelde te zien. Vermoedelijk hoorde zij tot het bezit van den schilder, die immers in Vlaanderen geboren werd; de Haarlemsche heeren toch hadden met deze landstreek niets te maken.'

5 Luns 1946, p. 51. All literature listed in the entry on the painting by P. Biesboer in Köhler 2006, pp. 486–488, no. 183, as well as in other sources, were checked for descriptions of and information on the map.

6 Brotton 2012, p. 226.

7 Ibid., p. 220.

into a commercial industry, and by the seventeenth century the Dutch Republic had become the centre of cartographic production in Europe.[8]

The Flemish mapmaker Jodocus Hondius (1563–1612) set up his business as a cartographer in Amsterdam in 1593 and bought the copper plates for Mercator's *Atlas* at auction in Leiden in 1604. He revised Mercator's maps, added 36 new ones and, in 1606, published the 'Mercator–Hondius Atlas'. After his death, his widow and two sons Jodocus II and Henricus continued the business. In 1621, Henricus started his own company on the Dam in a house named *De Atlas*. He continued to publish maps based on Mercator's copper plates.[9]

The area represented by the map was known to us during the restoration of the painting, but it was only with the help of Marco van Egmond, Curator of Maps, Atlases and Printed Works at Utrecht University Library, that we learned that the specific map depicted in the painting and its publishers had been identified – information that had yet to reach the field of art history.[10] He pointed us towards Schilder's 1996 corpus *Monumenta cartographica Neerlandica*, in which the painting and the map are discussed.[11]

Two wall maps of Flanders had been published by 1633, one in Amsterdam by Henricus Hondius and one in Ghent by Alexander Serhanders, both based on Mercator's map of the region. Schilder's research demonstrated that the two maps bear remarkable similarities and that they most likely resulted from collaboration between the two publishers. This particular map of Flanders was sold in Ghent at the same time with a title strip bearing Serhanders's name and in Amsterdam that of Hondius. Their map proved to be the one placed so prominently on the wall behind the regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital.

Since no complete example of the map has survived, merely a number of separate sheets, Hals's depiction of it was an important source of information for Schilder. Hals painted the wall map 'so faithfully that all the essential elements of the Hondius/Serhanders map can be distinguished. The structure of the dedication cartouche and its decorative elements are clearly visible, but since the text has not been legibly painted, it cannot be determined whether it is the Hondius or the Serlanders map'.[12]

How was the map made and what did it originally look like?

Large wall maps had to be printed from several copper plates and so invariably consisted of multiple sheets of paper glued onto canvas. Mercator's wall map of

8 Ibid., pp. 263–264. For an overview, see Koeman *et al.* 2007.
9 Ibid., pp. 1311-1313, 1324-1328, 1332-1333.
10 Email from M. van Egmond to the author, 8 July 2014.
11 Schilder 1996, vol. 5, pp. 355–368, no. VI.
12 Ibid., p. 363.

Flanders of 1540 was made up of nine sheets and measured 95 × 123 cm. Hondius and Serhanders assembled four sheets for the whole of the core area and three smaller strips to complete their map. There was room at the top edge for a title strip to be added.[13] Fine lines on the separate sheets indicated where the maps were to be cut off or overlap when glued together and mounted on the canvas support. Along its top and bottom edges, the canvas was attached to dark-coloured wooden rods, with bulb-shaped knobs at either end, around which the map could be rolled for storage. When on display, the rod at the top was hung from hooks in the wall, as can be seen in Hals's painting. A fringed textile band with alternating strips of white, orange, and blue was sewn onto the left and right edges of the canvas, similar to one shown on a map in a group portrait by Gerbrand van den Eeckhout. In that painting, it is also visible how one of the printed sheets of paper has peeled away from the canvas support (fig. 2). A full-scale reconstruction of the Hondius–Serhanders map was made for the 2015 exhibition, curated by Ariane van

Fig. 2. Gerbrand van den Eeckhout (1621–1674), *The Headmen of the Amsterdam Coopers and Wine-Rackers Guild,* 1657. Canvas, 163 × 197 cm. London, National Gallery (inv. no. NG 1459), detail

13 For the reconstruction, see ibid., p. 358, fig. 6.5. The title strip mentioned by Schilder seems to be missing in Hals's depiction of the map.

Fig. 3. Ariane van Suchtelen, Paula van Gestel and Günter Schilder, *Digital Reconstruction of the Hondius–Serhanders Map*

Fig. 4. The reconstruction of the painted map in the 2015 exhibition *Frans Hals: Work in Progress*

Suchtelen, *Frans Hals: Work in Progress*, on the project to study and restore Hals's three group portraits of regents (figs. 3 and 4).

The appearance of Hals's *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital* has changed over time. The map in the painting was originally more colourful, with blue and green

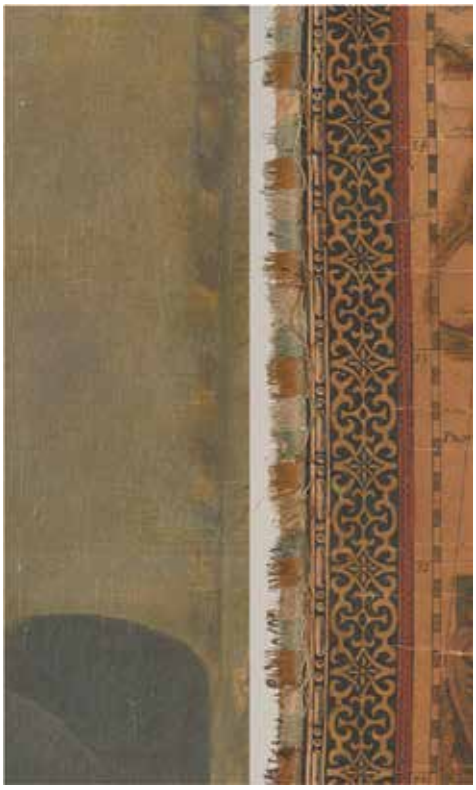

Fig. 5. The discoloured band of the painted map compared to a similar textile band of a wallmap of Lithuania, published around 1630 by Hessel Gerritsz, kept in the University Library of Uppsala. With thanks to Ariane van Suchtelen, Paula van Gestel, and Günter Schilder.

tones in the landscape and the sea and, as mentioned above, with strips of clear white, orange, and blue in the decorative textile band along the left and right edges. Vivianite was detected in the map,[14] a blue earth pigment that has been found in Roman paint residues, English medieval wall paintings, icons, and seventeenth- to eighteenth-century paintings from Austria. It was first identified in seventeenth-century Dutch paintings in 2001 and has been found in many others since, but never before in a work by Frans Hals.[15] Hals mixed the blue pigment with a yellow lake to achieve a green colour. He may well have chosen a local product, as vivianite was found in the peat bogs around Haarlem. Unfortunately, over time the earth pigment has lost its blue colour and now appears as brownish grey. The appearance of the decorative band along the sides of the map has changed as well. The white, orange, and blue have discoloured and darkened (fig. 5).[16]

14 Pigment analysis was carried out by Annelies van Loon. For acknowledgments, see, among others, Mireille te Marvelde's (et al.) essay in this volume (p. 111, n. 1).

15 See Spring 2001; Spring and Keith 2009; Eastaugh et al. 2008, pp. 397–398.

16 Abraham 2018. An article discussing the pigments found and the discolorations in the painting is in preparation.

Why Flanders?

In his book *A History of the World in Twelve Maps*, Jerry Brotton illustrated how a map can be read as a story, as it unfolds and represents events. Often, it is about time, too, as the map situates a historical event in space. Or, as Ortelius wrote, geography is 'the eye of history [...] the map being laid before our eyes, we may behold things done or places where they were done, as if they were at this time present'.[17]

Mercator had made his map of Flanders at the request of a group of Flemish merchants who were eager to express their loyalty to the Habsburg emperor in the hope of sparing Ghent and other rebellious cities from Charles V's armies. They commissioned Mercator 'to replace a map of the region that appeared to challenge Habsburg rule'.[18] This previous map of Flanders, published by Pierre van der Beke in Ghent in 1538, opposed the rule of the emperor. It was 'lined with references to Ghent's civic authorities, noble families and feudal rights and represented an early appeal to a Flemish "patrie", or Fatherland'.[19] Mercator's map on the other hand made the region's loyalty to the Habsburg emperor as explicit as possible. Unfortunately, his efforts were in vain; the city was attacked in force by the emperor's army as the map was nearing completion. This did not prevent the Flanders map from becoming very popular; it was reprinted many times.

What, then, is the story behind the map depicted in Hals's *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital*? Why is it present in the room? Did one or more of the regents have a Flemish background or might the hospital have been related to Flanders in some way? Did it perhaps own land in the area?[20] Or was it indeed, as Gratama wrote, a personal choice of Frans Hals, alluding to his own Flemish roots? Might the map, as Schilder suggested, refer 'to the special relationship between Flanders and Haarlem', given that 'Flemish emigrants had settled in Haarlem since the beginning of the century and been responsible for the prosperity of the linen industry, securing for the city large revenues and great prestige'?[21] Or was there perhaps a political motive for depicting Flanders?[22] It was, after all, in this area in particular that the war against the Spanish continued to rage far into the seventeenth century.

17 Brotton 2012, pp. 10 and 448, n. 22: Abraham Ortelius, *The theatre of the Whole World*, English translation (London 1606), 'To the Courteous Reader' (unpaginated).

18 Brotton 2012, p. 237. According to Landsman 2022, pp. 99–100, the map of Holland in the background of Vermeer's *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter* (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, loan City of Amsterdam, Van der Hoop Bequest, inv. no. SK-C-251) refers to estates belonging to the family.

19 Brotton 2012, pp. 237 and 465, nn. 27 and 28.

20 As suggested by N. Middelkoop, in Middelkoop and Van Grevenstein 1989, p. 67.

21 Schilder 1996, vol. 5, p. 363.

22 Dirck Hals (1591–1656), the younger brother of Frans Hals, incorporated a political commentary in his *Merry Musical Company* (Prague, Národni Gallery, inv. no. O 10162), by depicting a map of the provinces of the Northern and Southern Netherlands prior to their separation in 1581; see Schilder 1996, vol 8, pp. 429–430; and A. Ševčik in Ševčik 2012, pp. 177–178, no. 152.

II

'Know the conditions of the time.'
Hessel Miedema's rule of thumb

The regents and regentesses of St Elisabeth's Hospital belonged to the first boards of directors of a charity to have themselves portrayed in Haarlem in the seventeenth century. Frans Hals and Johannes Verspronck pioneered the creation of the genre in the city, after it had already blossomed much earlier in Amsterdam.[23] Around 1640–41, Frans Hals depicted the five regents who had recently administered the hospital with attributes indicating their position. Verspronck gave faces to the five regentesses in a similar way that same year (figs. 1 and 6).

At least twelve such 'regent pieces' are still present in Haarlem. In general, the paintings were commissioned to commemorate the tenure of the board and to become part of the appropriate decoration of the regents' and regentesses' rooms. But not all regents of charitable or other public institutions in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were portrayed. In some cases, there must have been a specific motive behind the wish to be immortalized, as a result of which one's portrait as a board member would acquire a place of honour. As we will see, a historic event might well have prompted the initiative in this case.

Unfortunately, nothing was put in writing about the commission to either Hals or Verspronck. Just like the civic guard officers who were regularly portrayed together, the regents and regentesses will have covered the costs themselves.[24] In the period 1639–1641, it was Siewert Sem Warmont, Salomon Cousaert, Johan van Clarenbeeck, Dirck Dircksz Del and Francois Wouters who managed the financial affairs of St Elisabeth's Hospital. Drawn from the upper middle class, they held various public positions in the city. Until recently, virtually nothing was known about the prominently displayed map in the background against which they are

23 For the situation in Amsterdam, see Middelkoop 2019, vol. 1, pp. 223–323, and vol. 3, pp. 827–904.

24 Little information has come down to us regarding payments by individual sitters for Haarlem corporate group portraits; for Amsterdam, see ibid., vol. 1, pp. 83–88. An idea of the payments made by the sitters in a Haarlem civic guard painting by Frans de Grebber of around 1612–15 can be found in K. Levy in Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 1988, pp. 366–367, no. 186; for the exceptional case of Jan de Bray's *Regentesses of the Children's Almshouse* of 1663, which was paid for by the institution itself, see W. van de Watering and K. Levy in Köhler 2006, pp. 408–409, no. 58; also in Giltaij 2017, pp. 132–134, no. 42. For biographical information on and references to the depicted regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital, see P. Biesboer in Köhler 2006, pp. 486–488.

Fig. 6. Johannes Verspronck (c. 1601/03–1661), *The Regentesses of St. Elisabeth's Hospital*, 1641. Canvas, 152 × 214.7 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. OS I-622)

portrayed. It turns out, however, that the detail reveals something about the possible reason for the commission. It was Seymour Slive, who suggested in 1989 it was a map of Flanders, but he was unable to verify this.[25] In the 2006 collection catalogue of the Frans Hals Museum, erring on the side of caution, the information about the painting states: 'the map has not been identified'.[26]

The discovery was made when the museum decided to examine and treat the painting in 2013. As discussed in the previous essay, questions about the map led to contact being made with a historian specialized in seventeenth-century cartography (fig. 7).

It was found that the depicted map dated from the first half of the seventeenth century and shows the northern part of Flanders, including what would become Zeeuws Vlaanderen (in the south-west of the Netherlands), an area in which there was still heavy fighting around 1640 during the Eighty Years' War (see p. 70 fig. 3).

25 Cat. Exhib. Washington / London / Haarlem, 1989–90, p. 284.

26 P. Biesboer in Köhler 2006, p. 488, n. 10.

Fig. 7. Detail of fig. 1

The identification of a map of northern Flanders hanging in a prominent place in the regents' room of a Haarlem hospital raised a number of further questions – for instance, whether the map actually hung in the regents' meeting room at the time or whether it was simply a prop for the painting. The question also arose whether Hals might have received help from a cartographer in the fairly accurate representation of the area. The hospital did not, at any rate, own any land in the relevant area. As noted already, fierce fighting continued in the region at the time between the Spanish and the Dutch States army under Stadtholder Frederik Hendrik. What's more, a map book has been preserved in the archives of St Elisabeth's Hospital, in which each of its land holdings is recorded by the renowned surveyor Pieter Wils (c. 1600–1647). It is clear from this that all such plots were located close to the city, which was likewise the case with Amsterdam institutions.[27]

It was common practice for benefactors to donate and bequeath land and goods to guesthouses for poor travellers, which were on the rise in Europe from the twelfth century onwards. Such gestures displayed their mercy. When local authorities later took charge of charitable institutions previously affiliated with monasteries, they became an important element of municipal poor relief. This also applied to local hospitals, which found themselves in financial difficulty shortly before and after the Reformation in the Netherlands. Haarlem city council, for instance, provided

27 Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief (NHA), acc. no. 3305, *Sint Elisabeths of Groote Gasthuis*, no. 91, 'Kaarten en schetsen van de landerijn, 17–19th century', P.Wils, Caert-Boeck van de landen toebehoorende den St. Elisabettengast-huyse, binnen Haerlem, gemeten en geteykent ANNO 1635, door Pieter Wils 1635, gesworen Landmeter.

St Elisabeth's Hospital, which cared for non-contagious, poor patients, with new premises between 1579 and 1581, after fire had reduced the old building to ashes. A solution for many institutions during that difficult period was to draw on revenue from confiscated Catholic churches and monasteries. Land donated prior to the Reformation remained an important source of financial support for an institution. An area of windswept sand dunes, for instance, donated in 1461 and later excavated and converted into bleaching grounds, provided St Elisabeth's Hospital with a substantial amount of rent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Money and/or goods were also provided by richer, paying guests known as *proveniers*. The care and treatment of soldiers likewise brought in money from the state, while the soldiers themselves had to give up part of their pay. Wealthy patients preferred, however, to be treated at home.[28]

The hospices that began to develop in the sixteenth century into hospitals as we know them, had even more tasks to fulfil. Their primary role of caring for the poor also entailed providing financial support in the home and funding poor patients in other charitable institutions. As of 1637, for instance, St Elisabeth's paid 60 guilders a year from its own funds to accommodate Pieter Hals, the artist's mentally handicapped son, at a different location by order of Haarlem council.[29] The payments were extended in 1642 when Pieter was transferred to a workhouse.[30] It was in this same period that Frans Hals portrayed the regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital and it is tempting to conclude that he made some kind of financial arrangement with them. Be that as it may, Hals and Johannes Verspronck played a part, as noted earlier, in the creation of the genre of regents group portraits in Haarlem.

Whether Hals faithfully depicted the regents' room, including the map, remains uncertain. The map is not mentioned in surviving eighteenth-century inventories. Perhaps the precious object had been lost in the meantime but there might also have been another reason for depicting it. There are several seventeenth-century paintings in which a map on the wall has a specific meaning. A well-known example is *The Art of Painting* of around 1666–68 by Johannes Vermeer, in which the map, together with other props and figures, indicates that the purpose of the picture is to praise the art of painting in the Low Countries.[31] The role of the map in other instances, however, is less obvious. In another Haarlem group portrait – Johannes Verspronck's *Regentesses of the Holy Spirit Almshouse* of 1642 – the map of the Low

28 For the history of the hospital, see Gaarlandt-Kist and Temminck 1981; for more detailed information, see Enschede 1860.

29 Van Thiel-Stroman 1989–90, pp. 391–392, nos. 80–81; the amount rose from 50 to 60 guilders between 9 and 25 February.

30 Ibid., pp. 394–395, no. 94.

31 Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. no. 9128.

Fig. 8. Johannes Verspronck (c. 1601/03–1661), *The Regentesses of the Holy Spirit Almshouse*, 1642. Canvas, 174 × 242 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. OS I-335)

Countries, visible on the wall in the background, has yet to be identified (fig. 8).[32] The intention in both portraits might have been to encourage the viewer to donate land. There could also be a parallel with the gesture of one of the regentesses of the Old Men's Almshouse painted by Hals around 1664, who looks directly at the viewer while showing her opened hand, with which she invites the viewer to give money (see p. 185, fig. 2). Or does the map on the wall of the regents' room offer a glimpse of the specific reason for the commission to Frans Hals around 1640?

As stated, as a charitable institution in the seventeenth century, the tasks of the Haarlem hospital were not confined to caring for the sick. It was also required, for example, to admit a fixed number of wounded and sick soldiers during the Eighty Years' War. The States army that kept the Spanish at bay and captured a number of cities represented a major expense for the young Dutch Republic. The largest contribution came from Holland, the richest region, and so it is not surprising that it was there, too, that calls for peace – eventually concluded in 1648 – were the loudest. Not so in Haarlem, however, which belonged firmly to the camp determined to continue waging war at all costs. The city council shared the

32 Köhler 2006, pp. 626–627.

stadtholder's opinion that it was still possible to take more cities and land. War policy in the 1630s and 1640s ran parallel with the successes of Frederik Hendrik, who had ensured greater security along the Republic's southern and eastern borders by conquering contiguous buffers.[33]

The States army, led by Stadtholder-Prince Maurits from 1589 to 1624, was not a mercenary force but a standing army. His half-brother Frederik Hendrik succeeded him as commander and remained so until shortly before his death in 1647. It is no coincidence perhaps that Frederik Hendrik sent a written appeal from the conflict zone in northern Flanders to Haarlem city council in 1640 for the immediate admittance of 40 to 43 wounded soldiers to St Elisabeth's Hospital. He appears to have been in the field at the time, given that his letter closes with 'Actum in the army in Kuytert, the 7th of July 1640'.[34] The hamlet of Kuitert or Kuitaart still exists, close to the town of Hulst in present-day Zeeuws Vlaanderen. Following a series of conquests, including 's-Hertogenbosch in 1629 and Breda in 1637, Hulst was the final town to fall to Frederik Hendrik in 1645, before peace was finally agreed in 1648.

It was no easy matter for a city hospital to admit 40 or more soldiers at once, who usually arrived from the war zone by ship under the supervision of surgeons. Nor was this an isolated request for Haarlem or other cities, since both Maurits and Frederik Hendrik considered it a question of honour to provide their soldiers with the help they needed. In addition to complex conditions such as bone fractures, soldiers also brought with them a risk of contagious diseases. And they could be rough types too, who were unwilling to abide by the house rules. At the beginning of the seventeenth century in Utrecht, for instance, hospital rules stated that throwing, hitting, punching and 'speaking coarsely to the nurses' were prohibited.[35] Governing from a distance, however, the regents would not have had much to do with such matters, principally involved as they were in the institution's financial affairs. What's more, after getting off to a difficult start at the end of the sixteenth century, things had gradually improved for St Elisabeth's Hospital in Haarlem. The aim was for income to cover expenses and, in the event of a positive balance,

33 For political developments in Haarlem, see Groenveld et al. 1995.

34 Haarlem, NHA, acc. no. 3305, no. 61, 'Stukken betreffende het opnemen en verplegen van zieke soldaten, 1622–1573', 7 July 1640: 'Sijne Hoogheijt heeft geconsenteert ende consenteert mits desen aen de gequetste soldaten van 't regiment van de colonel Erentreiter dat se sich vanhier sullen mogen vervougen naer Haerlem, omme aldaer gecureert te werden. Die van de magistraet aldaer versoekende d'selve gequetsten in haer stadts gasthuijse te doen accomoderen, mits dat se genesen sijnde, sich wederomme bij haere compagniën sullen hebben te vervougen. Actum in't Leger te Kuijtert, den 7en julij 1640' (with thanks to Hans van Felius, archivist). Frederik Hendrik's predecessor and brother, Prins Maurits, who died in 1625, sometimes made use of a high-ranking officer to ask for help. When the city council agreed with the request, the hospital administrators had to look for a suitable place within St Elisabeth's Hospital or elsewhere; see Spaans 1989, p. 185.

35 Kerkhoff 1976, p. 38.

to purchase land. One such good year appears to have been 1639, which saw a considerable surplus according to the surviving hospital accounts.[36] There was some financial leeway in 1640, therefore, to take in the soldiers, who, as mentioned earlier, also had to give up part of their pay to fund their care. City hospitals were also compensated by the state, but such payments did not always proceed smoothly.

Regarding the reason for the commission to Frans Hals, besides the administrative merits of the regents, who had matters well in hand by around 1640, and Frederik Hendrik's request to Haarlem that year, the group portrait might also contain a political statement. The stadtholder, who was first and foremost a military strategist, saw plenty of opportunities in the early 1640s for further conquests, including the capture of Antwerp, due to a weakened Spanish army. But it was proving increasingly difficult to obtain money from the States, particularly from wealthy Holland, with Amsterdam as the most important factor. As noted, by contrast, Haarlem remained hawkish.

Historically, a large number of Haarlem governors enjoyed close ties with the stadtholder's court. During the Twelve Years' Truce (1609–1621), for instance, Prince Maurits had intervened in Haarlem in 1618 to change the law and replace the city council with a governing apparatus more favourable to him and sharing his Counter-Remonstrant sympathies. As both stadtholder and military strategist, Maurits was able to count in the religious struggle that raged during the truce on the support of the doctrinaire Counter-Remonstrants against the more flexible Remonstrants. The latter opposed the stadtholders' excessive power and increasingly regal airs. But the stadtholder, whose principal task was to appoint burgomasters and aldermen from among nominated individuals, was able to exert considerable influence, for better or for worse. Having changed the law in Haarlem, for example, Maurits appointed a pensionary to act as his eyes and ears: Gillis de Glarges, who held the position from 1619 to 1637 (fig. 9). This powerful administrator, whose descendants continued to play a role in the city for many years more, was the father-in-law of Johan van Clarenbeeck, the regent who, as secretary of St Elisabeth's Hospital, was given a prominent place on the canvas in the centre of the group and might have been the driving force behind the commission. The layered representation would have been clear to viewers at the time, but was subsequently forgotten.

This is not the case with the allegory painted 40 years later, which takes the glorification of Frederik Hendrik as its subject (fig. 10). He is presented here as a peacemaker and the words 'Virtue and courage here crown the blood of orange, the nation's son of peace greeted by the maiden of Haerlem' appeared on the original frame (since lost), along with the coats of arms of the city councillors who

36 Haarlem, NHA, acc. no. 3305, no. 370, 'kasboek 1639–1653'.

Fig. 9. Michiel van Mierevelt (1567–1641), *Portrait of Gilles de Glarges (1559/60–1641)*, 1637. Panel, 112 × 84.5 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. OS I-258)

commissioned it.[37] Even then, following a period of doubt, the city of Haarlem remained a loyal ally of the Oranges. The painting, done by Jan de Bray in 1681, was to hang above a fireplace in the Prinsenhof in Haarlem, the stadtholder's residence. The regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital, who served together in 1639 and 1640, were less powerful and had a more implicit message incorporated into their group portrait – a message that only became clear with the identification of the map in the background of the painting. It would, however, have been perfectly plain to the hospital's regents in the years after 1640. The watchword seems to have been to keep the institution's finances in the best order possible while remaining loyal to the stadtholder, as this would lead to lasting prosperity and peace. Forty years later, Haarlem made its voice heard again, posthumously

37 'De Deugd en Dapperheid kroont hier oranjes bloed, 's lands vreezon Frederijk van Haerlems maagd begroet'. See K. Levy in Köhler 2006, pp. 412–414, no. 63; also in Giltaij 2017, pp. 183–185, no. 77.

Fig. 10. Jan de Bray (1626/27–1697), *Allegory of Frederik Hendrik as the Bringer of Peace*, 1681. Canvas, 217 × 218 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. OS I-38)

bestowing on Stadtholder Frederik Hendrik, previously known as 'Conqueror of Cities' (*stedendwinger*), the honorific 'Son of Peace' (*vreezon*) in the painted allegory.

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5. Willem or Balthasar? The *Portrait of a Member of the Coymans Family* by Frans Hals Reconsidered

Pieter Biesboer

Abstract: The identification of the portrait Frans Hals painted of a member of the Coymans family in 1645 (Washington, National Gallery of Art) is based on an analysis of the inscription in the painting. It originally appeared to show the sitter's age as '22'; now it reads '26'. Willem Coymans was baptized in 1623, so he seemed to be a logical candidate, but is he the actual sitter? To answer this question, it proved essential to establish the reason for the apparent correction of the young man's age.

Keywords: Old Master Painting, 17th century, Haarlem, Portraiture

In 1897, E.W. Moes identified the *Portrait of a Member of the Coymans Family* by Frans Hals, dated 1645, as depicting Balthasar Coymans (Dordrecht 1618–1690 Haarlem) at the age of 26, based on the coat of arms of the Coymans family and the inscription (fig. 1).[1]

It was with this identity that Andrew Mellon bequeathed the portrait to The National Gallery of Art in Washington in 1937. Two decades later, Seymour Slive noted that the final digit of the inscription 'AET. SVAE 26' had been altered and must originally have read '22'.[2] This observation led to the conclusion that the sitter could not be Balthasar or one of his younger brothers, but a young man from another branch of the Coymans family instead. Consequently, in 1970, Katrina Taylor identified the sitter as Willem Coymans (Amsterdam 1623–Haarlem 1678), the son of Coenraet Caspersz Coymans (Antwerp 1588–Haarlem 1659)

1 See Wheelock 1995, p. 76; Moes 1897–1905, vol. 1, no. 1779.

2 Slive 1958, n. 7.

N.E. Middelkoop and R.E.O. Ekkart (eds), *Frans Hals: Iconography – Technique – Reputation*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2024
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Fig. 1. Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Member of the Coymans Family, here re-identified as Balthasar Coymans (1618–1690)*, 1645. Canvas, 77 x 64 cm, Washington DC, National Gallery of Art, Andrew Mellon Collection (acc. no. 1937.1.69)

and Maria Schuyl van Walhorn. Baptized in Amsterdam on 20 August 1623, he would be the only possible Coymans candidate.[3] Taylor also pointed out that Willem Coymans and his father were recorded in Haarlem from the 1640s

3 Taylor 1970.

and both were buried in St. Bavo's Church: Coenraet on 29 November 1659 and Willem some time in 1678.[4]

Willem Coymans

Further investigation of the adverse circumstances of Coenraet Coymans and his son Willem in the year 1645 led me to believe, however, that neither Willem nor his father could have afforded to commission a portrait. Coenraet Coymans had been living in Amsterdam as a very successful merchant in colonial wares from both the East and the West Indies. His business activities are frequently recorded in the Amsterdam archives between 1625 and 1644, the year in which he was declared bankrupt. His debtors had turned to the Aldermen of Amsterdam, who ordered the *Desolate Boedelkamer*, the office in charge of the administration and settlement of bankrupt estates, to bring Coenraet's finances into order. Jean Gabrij, who had married Coenraet's daughter Anna Maria Coymans on 26 June 1637,[5] undertook to guarantee the debts.[6] Coenraet's problems most likely stemmed from the year before, in 1643, when he tried to help his sister Lucretia with a loan of 4,000 guilders to meet the demands of her own creditors.[7] Coenraet subsequently fled to his country residence in Heemstede to avoid the shame of bankruptcy and sought to keep a low profile.[8] His reputation in Amsterdam was nevertheless badly tainted and in 1645 his house on Oudezijds Voorburgwal opposite the Oude Kerk was sold.[9]

4 Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief (NHA), acc. no. 2142, *Doop-, trouw- en begraafboeken* (*DTB*) *van Haarlem* 1578–1811, inv. no. 81, f. 66: 'een opening inde Groote kerk voor Willem Koyman inde kerk nr. 256, fl. 4.' His father was buried in the same tomb, no. 256, in the nave of the St Bavo's Church; NHA, *DTB Haarlem*, inv. no. 72, p. 383.

5 Amsterdam City Archives (ACA), acc. no. 5001, *Doop-, trouw- en begraafboeken* (*DTB*) *van de stad Amsterdam 1553–1811*, inv. no. 446, p. 274: 'Jean Gabij van Ceulen out 30 jaeren geassisteert met Pieter Gabrij sijn vader wonende opde Keysersgracht ende Anne Maria Coijmans van Amsterdam out 27 jaeren geassisteert met Coenraet Coijmans en Maria Schuijl haer ouders.'

6 Montias *Frick database*, inv. no. 1251, 21 May 1644.

7 Montias, *Frick database*, inv. no. 1192, 17 February 1637. Lucretia had recently lost her husband Pieter Cruijppenningh and a list of some of her valuables was made to guarantee a loan of 4,000 guilders from Coenraet Coymans, her brother and 1,000 guilders from Guilliam van Hoorn.

8 Groesbeek 1972, p. 62. In 1661 it was called Rustmeer, when Willem Coymans, who had inherited the country house after his father had died, sold it. Later, it was torn down and a new house called Bosbeek was built, located on Glipperweg in Heemstede.

9 ACA, acc. no. 5066, *Archief van de Schepenen: register van willige decreten van het Hof van Holland* (*Kwijtscheldingen*), inv. no. 3, f. 156, 2 June 1645. The house on Oudezijds Voorburgwal called *De bonte Koe* was connected with a house on Oudezijds Achterburgwal, which both were sold together for 22,000 guilders on behalf of Coenraet Coymans by his son-in-law Jean Gabrij, his brother Casper Coymans and Daniel de la Straete, his brother-in-law, who was married to his wife's sister, Margrieta Schuijl. Coenraet

His son Willem Coymans, who was unmarried and still living with his parents, relocated with them to Heemstede.[10] Would this bleak time have been the proper moment to commission an unabashedly haughty portrait from Haarlem's renowned painter Frans Hals?

Moreover, if we inspect the portrait more closely, the elegantly dressed figure is posed from the left towards the right – an orientation traditionally associated in portraiture with a married man. Bachelors were usually depicted from the right towards the left, as in the portraits of *Willem van Heythuysen* in Munich and the so-called *Laughing Cavalier* in the Wallace Collection in London, possibly portraying Tieleman Roosterman (see p. 59, fig. 13). Willem Coymans had not married in 1645 and probably never did, as no documentary evidence points in that direction. He ought thus to have been posing in the opposite direction. Could it be that Moes identified the right Coymans after all?

Balthasar Coymans

Balthasar Coymans, by contrast, was actually married, having wed Anna Prins on 2 November 1642 in Rotterdam. Anna's father, Willem Ewoutsz Prins, had been one of that city's wealthiest brewers, owner of the brewery *In de Werelt* at the Leuvehaven.[11] Anna was accompanied at the service by her mother Maria Cornelisdr van Santen and her guardians. Her father had already died, which complicated the arrangement for her marriage contract.[12] The document itself was signed on 17 October 1642, demonstrating that an agreement had been reached between the future couple on the one hand and Anna's mother and her uncle Cornelis Ewoutsz Prins on the other. To compensate Maria van Santen, they undertook to rent her the brewery,

had bought the house from his father's estate with part of his inheritance and a loan which Jean Gabrij, Casper Coymans and Daniel de la Straete had guaranteed. They needed to be repaid.

10 Willem Coymans and his father never recovered from the bankruptcy. Coenraet's son-in-law, Jean Gabrij and his older brother Charles Gabrij helped him and they joined in business transactions together, but neither Coenraet nor Willem really regained much of their former wealth. The paintings listed in their estate do not include a portrait of Willem. When Willem was buried in the week before 30 April 1678 (Haarlem, NHA, *DTB*, inv. no. 81, f. 66), it was a simple funeral costing just 5 guilders. His estate was settled by the *Desolate Boedelkamer* (NHA, acc. no. 3111, inv. no. 640, May 1679). It appears that he was to receive an annuity of 100 guilders (annually on 1 January), but this was not collected for the years 1676–1679. The proceeds from his movable property amounted to just Dfl. 167:15. The paintings were sold by Jan van der Meer (alias Jan Vermeer van Haarlem, 1628–1691) for Dfl. 72:5. Five of these had been cleaned by Wouter Knijff (1605/06–1694) for which he was paid Dfl. 1:16. The total of Willem's estate amounted to a positive balance of Dfl. 424:16:4.

11 Rotterdam City Archive (RCA), *DTB*, inv. nos. 48: on 17 October 1642 the wedding banns of 'Balthasar Koeijmans j.m. van Haerlem' and 'Anna Prins j.d. van Rotterdam' were registered. The marriage ceremony took place on 2 October 1642 in Rotterdam.

12 RCA, acc. no. 18, inv. no. 152, notary Adriaan Kieboom, 14 October 1642, act no. 488, p. 722.

of which Anna would assume ownership on the day of her marriage, as specified in Willem Prins's will.[13]

Five years later, in 1647, following the death of Anna Dorothea Coymans, the only daughter of Anna Prins and Balthasar Coymans, Anna Prins's relatives authorized Cornelis Bosman to represent their legal interests in the estate of Anna Dorothea.[14] Negotiations with Balthasar Coymans evidently proved unsatisfactory, as they threatened to sue him for their portion of her estate.[15] All these unpleasant developments obliged Maria van Santen, Anna's mother, to change her will. Anna would no longer be her sole heiress and with the exception of a few bequests, her inheritance would be divided between her Van Santen relatives, her only daughter Anna, and her second husband, Jan van Blenckvliet.[16] Anna Prins died shortly after January 1651 and in September 1653 Balthasar Coymans married his second wife Maria Herrewijn.[17] All things considered, then, Balthasar was in a much better financial position than Willem to have his portrait painted in 1645.

Another key argument in favour of reconsidering the identification of the sitter in the Hals portrait is the existence of another likeness of Balthasar Coymans, who had also been portrayed three years earlier, just before his marriage. He is represented in this instance as one of the ensigns in Pieter Soutman's group portrait of the *Officers and Subalterns of the Civic Guard of St George*, who served during the period 1639–1642 (fig. 2).[18] Balthasar is depicted at the far right standing next to colonel Auwel Arisz Akersloot, who is sitting at the table. Comparing the two portraits we find a strong similarity in the shape of the head and the jawline, the arches of the eyebrows, the shape of the eyes, the straight nose and the shape of the mouth (figs. 3 and 4).

The style of the long curly hair and moustache looks similar as well. Comparing the Washington portrait with the 1644 portrait of Balthasar's father Josephus Coymans,

13 Ibid., inv. no. 152, notary Adriaan Kieboom, 14 October 1642, act no. 489, pp. 723–725. In this final version of the marriage contract, Joseph Coymans undertook to provide financial support to Balthasar, as did Maria van Santen to Anna. In return, Maria van Santen was to be allowed to rent the brewery In de Werelt. Should Anna die first, without children, her husband would inherit her jewellery and the sum of 5,000 guilders. If he were to die first, by contrast, she would receive a dowry of 10,000 guilders.

14 Ibid., inv. no. 544, notary Isaac Troost, 7 October 1647, act no. 40, p. 42.

15 Ibid., inv. no. 383, notary Jacobus Delphius, 23 January 1650, act no. 11, pp. 18–22.

16 Ibid., inv. no. 89, notary Johan van Weel de Oude, 23 December 1651, act no. 101, testament of Maria Cornelisdr van Santen.

17 The precise date of her death is not known, as the Haarlem burial registers for the period 1650–1659 were unfortunately lost. It is likely, however, to have occurred between January 1651 and September 1653, the date of Balthasar Coymans's second marriage. Maria Herrewijn, born in 1633, was the sister of the textile merchant Johan Herrewijn (see Biesboer 2001, p. 251). Her burial date is unknown.

18 Canvas, 182.5 × 394.5 cm, Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum, inv. OS I-314. See P. Biesboer in Köhler 2006, pp. 608–609, no. 430.

Fig. 2. Pieter Claesz Soutman (Haarlem 1593/1601– Haarlem 1657), *The Officers and Subalterns of the St. George Civic Guard*, 1642. Canvas, 182.5 x 394.5 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. OS I-314)

we notice a family resemblance in their features, in particular in the arched eyebrows and the shape of the eyes, but also in the straight nose and the jawline (fig. 5).

Frans Hals seems to have enjoyed the favour of Joseph Coymans's family, as he also painted a portrait of his wife Dorothea Berck in the same year (fig. 6), followed by portraits of his daughter Isabella Coymans and her husband Stephanus Geraerdts (?–1671), who married in Haarlem in 1644 (figs. 7 and 8).

Fig. 3. Detail of fig. 1

Fig. 4. Detail of fig. 2

Fig. 5. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Josephus Coymans (1591–after 1660),* 1644. Canvas, 83.8 x 69.9 cm. Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum of Art, Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Summer Fund (acc. no. 1958.176)

Fig. 6. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Dorothea Berck (1593–1684)*, 1644. Canvas 83.8 x 69.8 cm. Baltimore, Baltimore Museum of Art (acc. no. 38.231)

Fig. 7. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Stephanus Geraerdts (?–1671)*, c. 1645–50. Canvas, 117 x 87 cm. Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Art (inv. no. 674)

Fig. 8. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Isabella Coymans (1626–1689)*, c. 1645–50. Canvas, 116 x 86 cm. Private collection

The latter two are pendants which display a coat of arms, but neither inscription nor date.[19] The portraits of Joseph Coymans and Dorothea Berck, together with that of their eldest son Balthasar, seemingly formed a set, given the similarity between inscriptions and the coat of arms on these paintings.

Inscription and coat of arms

This brings us to the inscription on the Washington portrait. Why and when was the final digit of *22* changed into a *6*? When the portrait was exhibited at the art dealer Charles Sedelmeyer (1837–1925) in Paris in 1898, the catalogue interpreted the inscription with the age of the sitter – identified as 'Koeymanszoon van Alblasserdam' – as '22' rather than '26'.[20] At that time, the painting was in the possession of Rodolphe Kann, who had acquired it from Sedelmeyer in 1884.[21] Moes published his identification of the sitter as Balthasar Coymans in 1897 and must therefore have seen the portrait before then, probably in the collection of Rodolphe Kann. For some reason, he recorded the age of the sitter as '26'.

The issue of the inscriptions and coats of arms on portraits of Haarlem patricians is a complicated one. As Bok and Dudok van Heel pointed out in their article on Hals's Vooght-Olycan-Van der Meer portraits, most of the portraits made by Hals were still in Haarlem in the eighteenth century.[22] There are several surviving drawings and watercolour copies after these portraits, executed by artists like Jan van Sprang, Cornelis van Noorde, Wybrand Hendriks, and Gerard Waldorp, which do not display coats of arms or inscriptions, yet the paintings themselves do so at present. It can be proved, by way of illustration, that the coat of arms in the portraits of Jacob Pietersz Olycan and Aletta Hanemans in the Mauritshuis were added much later, probably when the paintings were in the Sypesteyn collection.[23] The copy of the Hals portrait of Cornelia Claesdr Vooght in the Frans Hals Museum, done by Jan van Sprang, has neither coat of arms nor inscription, so these must have been added to her original portrait later.[24] Bok and Dudok van Heel present a series of other examples of Hals portraits of the Olycan family to which coats of

19 Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, pp. 97–99, nos. 188–189.

20 Ibid., p. 85, no. 166.

21 See Ripps 2010, p. 67: 'Befitting of the great firm it was, Agnew's record by Hals was commendable. In May 1884, it acquired the *Portrait of Willem Coymans* (NGA) from Sir Alexander Malet, the diplomat friend of Otto von Bismarck. In the same month, Sedelmeyer purchased *Willem Coymans* for £750—thereafter placing the picture with Rodolphe Kann for FFr 22,000 (£880)'.

22 Dudok van Heel and Bok 2013, pp. 22–23.

23 These coats of arms were painted over during the 2006–07 restoration; see Meloni 2009.

24 Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, n.p., fig. 28.

Fig. 9. Detail of fig. 1

arms and inscriptions were added after 1790 – and some of them later still, in the early nineteenth century.

Might the Balthasar Coymans portrait have received the same treatment, with the inscription and the coat of arms added at a much later date? Examination of the coat of arms in the Coymans portrait suggests that it was painted by Frans Hals, as it is executed in his characteristic, sketchy manner, with swiping accents of the brush in the highlights on the ribbon and the contours of the shield (fig. 9). The rapid brushwork seen in the cow's head likewise points towards Hals's typical sketchy style. Close inspection of the inscription by Dinah Anchin, a conservator at the National Gallery of Art, revealed that both it and the coat of arms are most likely original.[25] This would mean that it was Frans Hals who corrected the age from '22' to '26', probably on the instruction of the sitter, after Coymans realized that Hals had written his age incorrectly. A restorer, probably employed by Sedelmeyer, uncovered the correction in the late nineteenth century, inadvertently creating a misunderstanding that has persisted for much too long.

25 I am grateful to Betsy Wieseman, Curator of European Art in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, who asked Dinah Anchin to study both the coat of arms and the inscription in the painting itself. She reported the following: 'There's no smoking gun or any hard evidence that indicates the coat of arms or inscription are not original. […] They largely look like they are original – there are cracks that run through all the paint layers in both the coat of arms and inscription and the paint mixtures look similar throughout these areas with the exception of one paint stroke. In the last digit of the 22, there is a stroke that has a thicker texture and different pigment particle size […]. But it also has cracks running through it. All I can say with confidence is that it looks a bit different but there's no evidence that it wasn't applied by Hals, or someone else later in time.'

Conclusion

Now that it appears that the coat of arms and the inscription – including the correction of the final digit *2* into a *6* – were applied by Frans Hals himself, the identification of the sitter needs to be reviewed. The portrait must represent Balthasar Coymans (1618–1690), as Moes initially postulated in 1897. Taylor's suggestion that the age of the portrayed man ought to be read as 22 years and that he should be identified as Willem Coymans (1623–1678) can be refuted by comparing the painting with a portrait of Balthasar Coymans as an ensign in the *Civic Guard Company* by Pieter Soutman (1642). The likeness is quite remarkable – a veritable match. Meanwhile, the bankruptcy of Coenraet Coymans, Willem's father, makes it highly unlikely that he or his son were in a position to commission a costly portrait by Haarlem's leading painter. It seems likely, moreover, that the portrait formed an ensemble with Hals's pendant portraits of Balthasar's parents Josephus Coymans and Dorothea Berck. The rendering of the coat of arms and the inscription looks very similar – and all executed by Hals himself – in all three portraits. It is tempting to think that the ensemble was commissioned by Josephus Coymans – to be presented to his son Balthasar, who had recently married and founded a younger branch of the family – or by Balthasar Coymans himself, for the same reason. The question remains as to whether his wife Anna Prins was portrayed at the same time as the pendant. To date, no portrait of her painted by Hals or another master has been identified.

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6. Frans Hals's Portraits of Painters: A Reconnaissance

Norbert E. Middelkoop

Abstract: Frans Hals portrayed a considerable number of fellow artists in the second half of his career. The portraits of Adriaen van Ostade, Frans Post, and Vincent van der Vinne are still there to be admired, but others are only known through early reproductions or references in inventories. This paper focuses on what these artists' portraits might tell us about Hals's artistic production in his later years. With the help of both conventional and alternative criteria, several new identifications are proposed.

Keywords: Old Master Painting, 17th century, Haarlem, Artists' Portraits, Facial Resemblance, Biometric Pattern Recognition, Identifications

The usual keys to identifying a portrait are provided by dates and ages given on the painting, a contemporary coat-of-arms, specific attributes, as well as archival references – and preferably an impeccable provenance from the moment it left the sitter's house. If one of those is missing, the others become more important. Looking at Hals's oeuvre, however, we are confronted with many cases in which there is little to go on: portraits without inscriptions, coats-of-arms, or archival sources mentioning the sitters' names. All we have are the likenesses themselves.

Fortunately, there are also other ways to establish an identity, such as via copies made after the painting, with an accompanying text revealing the sitter's identity. Hals's portraits of the painters Frans Post (c. 1612–1680) and Vincent van der Vinne (1629–1702) have been identified on the basis of a print by Jonas Suyderhoef and a mezzotint copy, respectively, while in the case of of Adriaen van Ostade (1610–1685), there is a credible resemblance to at least two undisputed portraits of the artist (figs. 1–6).[1] I have chosen these examples on purpose, as within Hals's oeuvre from the second half of his career we come across a remarkable number of likenesses of young

1 See Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, pp. 99–100, no. 192 (Van Ostade, c. 1650–52), pp. 105–106, no. 206 (Post, c. 1655), pp. 104–105, no. 203 (Van der Vinne, c. 1655–60); Grimm 1972, pp. 105–106, 204, no. 122 (van Ostade, c. 1643–44), pp. 111–112, 205, no. A 35 (Post, c. 1652–54), pp. 114, 206, no. 156 (Van der Vinne, c. 1658); Grimm

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Fig. 1. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Adriaen van Ostade*, c. 1646–48. Canvas, 94 × 75 cm. Washington DC, National Gallery of Art, Mellon Collection (acc. no. 1937.1.70)

Fig. 2. Jacob Gole (1665–1724) after Cornelis Dusart (1660–1704), after Hals, *Portrait of Adriaen van Ostade*, c. 1685. Mezzotint, 198 × 158 mm. Haarlem, Teylers Museum (inv. no. KG 04183)

Fig. 3. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Frans Post*, c. 1655. Panel, 27.5 × 23 cm. Worcester, Worcester Art Museum, Stoddard Acquisition Fund (acc. no. 1994.273)

Fig. 4. Jonas Suyderhoef (1614–1686), *Portrait of Frans Post*, c. 1655–86. Engraving and etching, 27.8 x 22.9 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv.no. RP-P-OB-60.755)

Fig. 5. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Vincent Laurensz van der Vinne*, in or just before 1652. Canvas, 64.7 × 48.9 cm. Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, Bequest of Frank P. Wood, 1955 (acc. no. 54/32)

Fig. 6. Vincent van der Vinne II (1686–1742), attributed, after Frans Hals, *Portrait of Vincent Laurensz van der Vinne*. Mezzotint, 122 × 98 mm. Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief (inv. no. 1100/49960)

men, most of them – like the three just mentioned – without a female companion piece. Might some of these also be identified as fellow artists? And if so, what do these male portraits tell us about Hals's output during the painter's later years?[2]

Different approaches

In a 2017 broadcast on Dutch television, Frans Grijzenhout and his assistants explored the possibility that Hals's *Portrait of a Young Man* from the Berlin Gemäldegalerie, painted around 1630–1633, represents Jan Miense Molenaer (1609/10–1668), by comparing it to a handful of presumed self-portraits of the artist (figs. 7 and 8).[3] Grijzenhout sent an image to a specialist in biometric pattern recognition, alongside

1989, pp. 46–48, 287, no. 123 (Van Ostade, c. 1644); Wheelock 1995, pp. 79–83 (Van Ostade, c. 1646–48); Slive 2014, pp. 306 (Post), 307 (Van der Vinne), 308 (Van Ostade, c. 1646–48).

2 I am grateful to Frans Grijzenhout for his critical reading of and fruitful remarks on a draft version of this article.

3 F. Grijzenhout, assisted by J. van Marissing and S. Thomassen, *Kunstraadsels*: 'Onbekend echtpaar', broadcast on Dutch public television 6 July 2017, in which episode Molenaer expert Cynthia von Bogendorf Rupprath suggests the Berlin portrait might represent Molenaer, based on the resemblance to his undoubted likeness on the Molenaer family portrait in the Frans Hals Museum of c. 1635 (inv. no. OS 75-332).

Fig. 7. Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Young Man, possibly Jan Miense Molenaer*, c. 1632–35. Canvas, 75.7 × 61.4 cm. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (cat. no. 800). Photograph: Christoph Schmidt

the other likenesses and a number of randomly selected faces, a prerequisite in this kind of research.[4] The broadcast was prompted by the fact that the inventory of Molenaer's estate, dated 10 October 1668, mentions portraits of him and his wife Judith Leyster (1609–1660) by Frans Hals.[5] The questions Grijzenhout set out to

Fig. 8. Still from *Kunstraadsels* 2017, showing (presumed) self-portraits by Jan Miense Molenaer

4 Raymond N.J. Veldhuis of Nijmegen University.

5 Bredius 1915a, p. 7, no, 132.

answer were, firstly, is this indeed Molenaer we are looking at and, secondly, with respect to the *Portrait of a Woman* (which also entered the Berlin collection in 1840), could she represent Judith Leyster?[6] The conclusions were quite spectacular: according to the forensic report there was just a 0.5% possibility that Hals's sitter is *not* the same man that Molenaer himself painted several times.

The case is far from closed, however, primarily because of the status of the other painting, which has a different canvas structure, while the woman depicted does not show a striking resemblance to Judith Leyster's famous *Self-Portrait at the Easel*.[7] If one were nevertheless willing to accept her identification and given the fact that Molenaer and Leyster married in 1636, the possibility arises that her portrait was commissioned from Hals at a later date to form a pair with Molenaer's bachelor portrait – which would, incidentally, explain the different canvas structures of the Berlin pair. On the other hand, the reference in the inventory might still relate to another, unknown pair of portraits. In either case, the outcome of the alternative research into the male portrait highlights the value of going beyond traditional methods when trying to identify otherwise nameless sitters.

There are more ways besides to achieve plausible identifications. In a footnote to his 2006 dissertation, Sebastien Dudok van Heel suggested that the standard bearer in Hals's so-called *Meagre Company*, the artist's only Amsterdam civic guard piece, started in 1633, had to be Nicolaes van Bambeeck.[8] He based his hypothesis not only on the resemblance to Rembrandt's portrait of this man, painted eight years later, but also on the fact that Bambeeck lived in precinct XI, for which this civic guard company was responsible, and that he was a bachelor in 1633, a prerequisite for standard bearers.

During my own research into the Amsterdam group portraits I, too, have sought to name individual likenesses in group portraits, doing so based on facial resemblances, but always sustained by additional evidence, such as lists of governors of charitable institutions or archival records relating to the commissions, or by address data that can be linked to the precinct-related civic guard companies.[9] Having combed the invaluable RKD website resources for comparative material, I suggested several additional matches for the *'Meagre Company'*, including one for Pieter Codde (1599–1678), the very artist who completed the unfinished painting in 1637, probably because he also lived in the company's precinct (figs. 9 and 10).[10]

6 Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, p. 53, no. 89 (as companion piece to the male portrait – no. 88).

7 Washington DC, National Gallery of Art, inv. no. 1949.6.1; see Wheelock 1995, pp. 155–159 (as c. 1630).

8 Dudok van Heel 2006, p. 116 n. 182.

9 Middelkoop 2019, vol. 1, pp. 78–79 and 100–133, *passim*.

10 First hinted at by Van Eeghen 1974, pp. 139–140 (without specifying a particular sitter); I elaborated on this in Middelkoop 2019, vol. 1, p. 114 and vol. 3, pp. 799–800, no. S. 77. This hypothesis has been

Fig. 9. Pieter Codde (1599–1678), *Self-Portrait in Front of the Easel*, c. 1628–30 (detail). Panel, 30.5 × 25 cm. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (inv. no. 1125)

Fig. 10. Frans Hals, '*The Meagre Company*', 1633, finished by Pieter Codde in 1637 (detail). Canvas, 209 × 429 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, loan City of Amsterdam (inv. no. SK-C-374)

Two portraits of painters

This is where the aforementioned individual portraits of artists come in. In addition to the painters Adriaen van Ostade, Frans Post, and Vincent van der Vinne, we know from early archival sources that Hals likewise portrayed Jan van de Cappelle and Leendert van der Cooghen, while his portraits of Thomas Wyck and Jacob van Campen survive in the form of copies.[11] This brings the number of Hals's portraits of painters to nine, those of Molenaer and Leyster included. Beside these, two more paintings that were clearly created in Hals's workshop can be associated with painters because of the depicted attributes: a palette and a brush respectively.

strengthened by recent research on Codde, which identifies the *Portrait of a Painter* in Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (inv. no. 1125) firmly as a *Self-Portrait* of the artist; see Rosen 2020, pp. 54, 60–64, and 225, cat. no. 2. See also Raupp 1984, p. 235.

11 Bredius 1892, p. 33 (Van den Cappelle); Bredius 1915, p. 34, no. 137 (Van der Cooghen); Biesboer 2001, pp. 301–316, esp. 304, no. 137 (Van der Cooghen); Slive 1970–74, vol. 1, pp. 185–191, vol. 3, pp. 122–123, no. L14 (Wyck), and pp. 125–126, no. L18 (Van Campen).

Fig. 11. Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Painter*, 1644. Canvas, 82.6 × 64.8 cm. Chicago, The Art Institute, Hutchinson Collection – gift of Charles L. Hutchinson (acc. no. 1894.1023)

The first – the one with a palette hanging on the wall – is in the Art Institute of Chicago (fig. 11).[12] It is inscribed with the year 1644, the final digits somewhat emphasized. The sitter's age has been read in the past as '32' but cannot, in fact, be deciphered convincingly. He certainly looks like someone in his late twenties or early thirties, which would rule out the previously mentioned artists as sitters, since they were all much younger in 1644. The painter – who appears to be holding one or two brushes in his left hand – was identified by E.W. Moes in 1897 as Harmen Hals (1611–1669), Frans's son from his first marriage, who also became a painter.[13] Moes repeated his claim in 1909, stating 'comme les traits ont beaucoup de ressemblance avec ceux d'autres fils du peintre et que l'âge correspond absolument, nous pouvons donner pour certain que le portrait était celui de Herman [sic] Hals'.[14] Since Harmen turned 33 in 1644, it is indeed possible that he is our sitter. Unfortunately, we have no other securely identified portraits of him (nor of any of Hals's other sons) with which the artist's face might be compared.[15] It might be worth noting, however,

12 Slive 1970–74, vol. 1, pp. 83–84, no. 164.

13 Moes 1897–1905, vol. 1, no. 3140.

14 Idem 1909, pp. 82 and 102, no. 39.

15 Two eighteenth-century watercolour portraits, inscribed 'Harmen Hals', one by Taco Hajo Jelgersma, have recently been convincingly recognized as partial copies after Pieter Codde's *Self-Portrait* (fig. 9) by Rosen 2020, pp. 60–62 and 226–227, cat. nos 2A–B. The so-called 'Peintre ambulant' now in the Louvre (inv. no. RF 2130; Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, p. 136, no. D22-1), was described by Moes 1909, p. 102, no. 40, as a

Fig. 12. Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Painter* (here tentatively identified as Philips Wouwerman), c. 1650. Canvas, resp. 100.3 × 82.9 cm. New York, © The Frick Collection (acc. no. 1906.1.71). Photograph: Michael Bodycomb

Fig. 13. Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Woman* (here tentatively identified as Annetje Broeckhof), c. 1650. Canvas, 100 × 81.9 cm. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Marquand Collection – gift of Henry G. Marquand, 1890 (acc. no. 91.26.10)

that in 1910 Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, who questioned Moes's identification, catalogued a portrait rather similar to the Chicago painting – seemingly a version in reverse, including the palette on the wall and the arm akimbo – as a 'so-called likeness of David Teniers', adding 'in any case the juxtaposition of Frans Hals as a painter, and Teniers as sitter, is wrong'.[16] Although Teniers turned 34 in 1644, the comparison with later portraits of him fails to convince. For the time being, therefore, the painter in the Chicago portrait will have to remain nameless.

The second portrait, datable around 1650 and depicting an artist holding a brush, has a companion piece (figs. 12 and 13). Despite the 'official' demeanor created by the columns, which were added later, the painter's pose and relaxed gaze of both sitters suggest a rather informal attitude. Wilhelm Valentiner identified the couple as Frans Hals and his second wife Liesbeth Reyniers – a hypothesis that Slive and others rightly rejected.[17] More recently, Paul Crenshaw suggested they might be the portraits of Jan Miense Molenaer and Judith Leyster mentioned in the

portrait 'presumé de Reynier Hals' and by Van Hall 1963, p. 127, as a portrait of Nicolaes Hals. Modern research however has made clear the painting and the easel in the background are later additions.

16 Hofstede de Groot 1910, p. 57, no. 185 (Harmen Hals) and p. 69, no. 230 (Teniers).

17 See Slive 1970–74, vol. 1, pp. 185–186 and vol. 3, pp. 96–97, nos. 186–187.

Fig. 14. Cornelis Visscher (1629–1658), *Portrait of Philips Wouwerman*, c. 1640–45. Black chalk, 215 × 165 mm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques (inv. no. 23120, recto)

1668 inventory.[18] Based at least on Molenaer's presumed self-portraits (fig. 8) and Leyster's *Self-Portrait*, we can safely state, however, that there is no resemblance to the painter and his wife as portrayed by Hals. Might the artist instead represent Philips Wouwerman (1619–1668)? My reason for suggesting this is the striking facial resemblance between Hals's painter and the younger man in the portrait drawing by Cornelis Visscher which, according to the inscription on the related 1734 print by Nicolas-Gabriel Dupuis (1698–1771), depicts 'Philippus Wouwerman Pictor Batavus' (fig. 14).[19] Both sitters have similarly round faces, marked by a somewhat weak jawline and a long straight nose, as well as similar gazes, with relatively prominent upper eyelids and high eyebrows. Wouwerman is mentioned as a pupil of Frans Hals in Cornelis de Bie's *Gulden Cabinet* of 1661 – published, that is, within both artists' lifetimes – so the two men must have known each other well. If we are inclined to support this identification, it follows that the accompanying woman is Wouwerman's wife, Annetje van Broeckhof, whose dates of birth and death are unknown.[20]

18 Paul Crenshaw, lecture 'Frans Hals's Portrait of an Older Judith Leyster', College Art Association Annual Conference, Chicago, 10–13 February 2010; see Crenshaw 2021.

19 Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. RP-P-OB-43.299.

20 For an analysis of Wouwermans's drawn *'Self-Portrait'* in the British Museum, London (inv. no. 811.586), and Visscher's drawing, see Q. Buvelot in Cat. Exhib. Cassel / The Hague 2009–10, pp. 152–153, no. 38.

A changing career

In all, we have now counted eleven colleagues among Hals's sitters. It is noteworthy that all the portraits mentioned, with the possible exceptions of those of Jan Miense Molenaer and Judith Leyster, date (or must have dated) from the mid-1640s or later, as the unknown but documented portraits would likewise not have been produced before the sitters had approached the age of twenty. What might have prompted this striking flow of painters' portraits? The sitters evidently wished to be immortalized by Hals, but why was this?[21]

First of all, judging from Hals's surviving oeuvre, the number of regular commissions was decreasing during the second half of his career. Female sitters in particular seem to have preferred other painters, as only a small number of single portraits of women produced after 1645 can be attributed to Hals or connected to his workshop.[22] Secondly, it is clear from archival sources that Hals experienced financial difficulties throughout his life – a situation that worsened towards the end. In 1661, Hals was exempted from paying his annual dues to the painters' guild because of his old age, and in the years that followed he would receive financial assistance from the city of Haarlem.[23]

Such problems did not prevent Balthasar de Monconys from noting after a visit to Haarlem in 1663 that Frans Hals was 'rightfully admired' by the greatest painters of his time.[24] In some cases, this admiration apparently went further than verbal praise alone. Hals's fellow artists might have realized that commissioning a portrait would help him to cope with his difficult personal situation for a while. For them, Frans Hals must have been nothing less than a living legend – one of the few in their circle who had personally known Hendrick Goltzius, Cornelis van Haarlem and Carel van Mander. Finding himself in increasing debt, the elderly artist must have welcomed fellow painters who asked to have their portrait done by him. Given the considerable number of unidentified portraits, mostly of young men in informal poses, many of them smiling, the colleagues mentioned by name above may not have been the only ones to pass through Hals's studio. It is quite likely, in fact, that other fellow artists might also have been involved in commissioning some of the unidentified late male portraits.

21 The *Portrait of a Man* in the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts (Slive 1970–74, vol. 3 pp. 101–102, no. 194), identified as Jan Asselijn by some scholars on the basis of its supposed resemblance to Rembrandt's portrait etching of the artist, is not included in this overview.

22 Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, nos. 170–173 (c. 1648), 174 (c. 1648–50), 183 (c. 1650–51), 185, and 187 (c. 1650–52), 196 and 205 (c. 1655–60), and 222 (c. 1664), all paintings catalogued as not by Hals but from his workshop by Grimm 1989–90 (*passim*). See also the *Portrait of Isabella Coymans* (p. 88, fig. 8), which should be dated c. 1645–50, not c. 1650–52 (Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, no. 189).

23 See Van Thiel-Stroman 1989–90, pp. 409–413, doc. nos. 164, 170, 171, 174–178, and 181.

24 Ibid., p. 411, doc. no. 173.

Fig. 15. Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Young Man*, c. 1650–55. Canvas, 67.3 × 50.8 cm. Pasadena, Norton Simon Museum – gift of Norton Simon (acc. no. M.1972.4.P)

Jan van de Cappelle

One name deserves special attention here: that of marine painter Jan van de Cappelle (1626–1679). His rich estate inventory, drawn up after his death in 1679, lists a huge art collection, including no less than eight works by Hals. Perhaps most remarkable among the paintings are three portraits of Van de Cappelle by Rembrandt (no. 31), by Frans Hals (no. 32) and by Gerbrand van den Eeckhout (no. 102), as well as a portrait drawing of him by Jan van Noordt (no. 123).[25] In 1941, Wilhelm Valentiner sought to identify Van de Cappelle among the nameless portraits of the four masters mentioned, coming to the conclusion that the *Portrait of an Artist* in the Frick Collection had to be Rembrandt's likeness of Van de Cappelle and the *Young Man* in the Norton Simon Collection the one done by Frans Hals (fig. 15).[26] The Van Noordt drawing, tentatively identified by Valentiner as depicting Van de Cappelle, has meanwhile been firmly identified as someone else's portrait.[27] Thirty years later,

25 Bredius 1892, pp. 33 (nos. 31–32) and 35 (nos. 102 and 123). A portrait of Van de Cappelle modelled in clay is also listed (ibid., p. 36, no. 147). The original document is in the Amsterdam City Archives, acc. no. 5075, *Notarissen ter standplaats Amsterdam*, notary Adriaen Lock, no. 2262B, fols. 1176–1227, scan nos. 317–344.

26 Valentiner 1941. The Frick *Portrait of an Artist* (acc. no. 99.1.96) is no longer attributed to Rembrandt but to a follower.

27 Dionijs Wijnands (1628–1673); see De Witt 2007, pp. 305–306, no. D14.

Fig. 16. Gerbrand van den Eeckhout (1621–1674), *Portrait of Jan van de Cappelle*, 1653. Canvas, 75.5 × 57.7 cm. Amsterdam Museum (inv. no. SA 40424)

Fig. 17. Jan van Noordt (1623/24–1676), *Portrait of Annetje Grotincx*, 1653. Canvas, 74.4 × 57.5 cm. Paris, Fondation Custodia, Frits Lugt Collection (inv. no. 8835)

Seymour Slive was not convinced, with the result that the young man by Frans Hals retreated once more into anonymity.[28]

What both Valentiner and Slive overlooked, though, was that the reference in the inventory to Van de Cappelle's portrait by Van den Eeckhout is immediately followed by 'the portrait of the deceased's late wife' by Jan van Noordt.[29] Only in 1981 did Saskia Nystad cautiously link this reference with two paintings of equal size and by different hands that surfaced in the early 1960s and were separated a few years later (figs. 16 and 17).[30]

The male portrait is signed 'Van den Eeckhout' and dated 1653, the year in which Jan van de Cappelle and Annetje Grotincx issued their wedding banns. The woman's portrait is unsigned but was reattributed by David de Witt to Van Noordt in 2018,

28 Slive 1970–74, vol. 1, p. 190; vol. 3, p. 103, no. 200.

29 Bredius 1892, p. 35, no. 103. Because no. 103 is specifically listed as 'Een conterfeytsel sijnde des Overleden's vrouw zal[r]' it is not likely that no. 76, 'Een vrouwetrony van Frans Hals, sijnde sijn vrouw' (ibid., p. 34), also refers to a portrait of Van de Cappelle's wife; as it is followed by 'Een dito trony van Frans Hals' (ibid., no. 77), these two nos. rather seem to describe portraits of Frans Hals and his wife.

30 Nystad 1981.

Fig. 18. Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Man*, c. 1648–50. Canvas, 63.5 × 53.5 cm. Washington DC, National Gallery of Art, Widener Collection (acc. no. 1942.9.28)

following its restoration.[31] This means that the likeness of the young man by Van den Eeckhout ought to be the starting point for a renewed attempt to identify Jan van de Cappelle among the portraits of both Hals and Rembrandt. Restricting ourselves to the former and working on the basis of resemblance, Valentiner's candidate seems to fall short of making a comeback, but might Hals's *Portrait of a Man* in the Washington National Gallery be considered as depicting Van den Cappelle (fig. 18)?[32] In his entry on the painting, Arthur Wheelock suggested that the sitter might well be an artist, comparing the hand placed on his chest to the iconographic tradition for artists' portraiture, in which the gesture conveys not only sincerity and passion but also artistic sensibility.[33]

Candidate sitters

As stated above, given the eleven names of artists that can be linked to portraits by Frans Hals, plus the two portraits of painters with their attributes, it is worth

31 D. de Witt, email to the author, 31 July 2018. N.B. in De Witt 2007, p. 258, no. R49, still as rejected attribution.

32 A drawing by Pieter Holsteyn II after this portrait in the Rijksmuseum (pen in black, 157 × 131 mm, inv. no. RP-T-1893-A-2776), possibly intended as the design for a print, shows the sitter bareheaded.

33 Wheelock 1995, pp. 85–88, providing arguments for an earlier date for this portrait (Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, pp. 102–103, no. 198 (as c. 1655–60).

considering that there might have been other artists who approached Hals, too. We should therefore keep an eye open for them, especially within his later oeuvre. Searching for candidate sitters has become easier these days thanks to the internet, especially the digital treasure trove of the RKD, where proven or presumed likenesses of artists can be readily found. Facial recognition provides a promising start, but each hypothetical identification ought ideally to be backed up by additional arguments. What I have tried to make clear is that a major argument in this regard is grounded in the fact that a considerable number of former pupils and artists with links to Haarlem did indeed commission portraits from Hals. Not only must they have admired Hals's quality as a portraitist, they would also have been aware of his precarious financial situation in precisely the period in which we encounter this remarkable flow of informally posing young men.

Allow me, then, to take up the challenge and present three well-known faces from the final years of Hals's career (figs. 19, 21 and 23). These paintings are frequently mentioned together with the *Portrait of a Man* in the Musée Jacquemart-André and the *Portrait of a Man in a Slouch Hat* in Cassel, which might also represent fellow artists, given the nonchalant poses and smiles that suggest a familiarity between

Fig. 19. Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Young Man* (here tentatively identified as Job Berckheyde), c. 1660–66. Canvas, 80 × 67 cm. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum (acc. no. 150)

Fig. 20. Job Berckheyde (1630–1693), *Self-Portrait*, c. 1660–62. Panel, 52 × 40 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. OS I-14)

Fig. 21. Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Young Man* (here tentatively identified as Gerrit Berckheyde), c. 1660–66. Canvas, 85.8 × 67 cm. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts – gift of Mrs. Antonie Lilienfeld in memory of Dr. Leon Lilienfeld (acc. no. 66.1054)

Fig. 22. Job Berckheyde (1630–1693), *Portrait of Gerrit Berckheyde*, 1654. Copper, 11 × 8.5 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. OS I-12)

painter and sitter.[34] The five paintings are thought on stylistic grounds to have been produced by Hals between 1660 and 1666. Juxtaposing the first two with the portraits of Job Berckheyde (1630–1693) and his younger brother Gerrit (1638–1698) – both painted by the former (figs. 20 and 22) – I am intrigued by their resemblance, even though no archival records are known regarding portraits of them done by Hals.

Job Berckheyde was 35 years old in 1665 and Gerrit 26 or 27 – ages in keeping with the sitters in Hals's portraits. Both had been active in Haarlem since the 1660s, following their travels in Germany. Job's *Self-Portrait*, datable to the early 1660s, shows a similar, somewhat elongated face, with a long, slightly hooked nose and a thin, parted pencil moustache above pursed lips, just like the relaxed and jolly sitter in his grey-green cloak painted by Hals. The much earlier miniature portrait of Gerrit on the other hand shows him with a rounded baby face, long and abundant curly hair, a round nose and small eyelids, and again, a parted pencil moustache, just like Hals's young man in his fashionable red Japanese-style chamber gown, who does indeed look a little older.[35]

34 Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, pp. 110–111, nos. 216 and 217.

35 Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, pp. 111–112, no. 220, suggests the sitter is wearing 'a modish long wig'.

Fig. 23. Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Young Man* (here tentatively identified as Leendert van der Cooghen), c. 1660–66. Canvas, 70 × 58.5 cm. Zurich, Kunsthaus, on long-term loan from the Bührle Collection (inv. no. BU 0151)

Fig. 24. Leendert van der Cooghen, *Self-Portrait*, 1653? Black chalk, 158 × 113 mm. London, British Museum (inv. no. 1836,0811.327)

Based on more circumstantial evidence, I am inclined to tentatively identify the third late *Portrait of a Young Man*, now in the Zurich Kunsthaus (fig. 23), as the documented portrait of Leendert van der Cooghen (1632–1681), mentioned in the inventory of Cornelis Dusart's estate in 1704.[36] It shows a well-dressed youngster with unkempt curly hair, his collar opened. In this case we can use the artist's drawn self-portrait, made about ten years before, as a comparative image (fig. 24).

Particularly striking are the relatively small mouth and the large, wide open eyes, separated by the pronounced bridge of his nose.[37] Interestingly, there is a second, more recent document, too: a Van der Cooghen portrait by Hals is mentioned by E.W. Moes in 1897 as 'formerly with art dealer [Otto] Mündler in Paris'.[38] I have not yet

36 Bredius 1915, p. 34, no. 137, and Biesboer 2001, p. 304, no. 137. The original document is in Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief, acc. no. 1617, *Old Notarial Archives*, inv. no. 683, notary Melchior van Cleynenberg, no. 170.

37 Another *Self-Portrait* by Van der Cooghen, dated 1651 (Hamburger Kunsthalle, inv. no. 22091) should be mentioned in support of this assumption; see Coenen 2005, pp. 7–13, 46, no. A1 and p. 50, no. A16.

38 Moes 1897–1905, vol. 1, p. 194, no. 1687.

been able to establish a link between this now untraced work and the provenance of the Zurich painting, which goes back to 1883.[39]

In his entry on Hals's *Portrait of Adriaen van Ostade* (fig. 1), Arthur Wheelock suggested that the sitter might have commissioned this painting to mark his election – for the first time – as a headman (*vinder*) of the Haarlem guild of St Luke in 1647.[40] This is an attractive thought, considering that Wouwerman, too, joined the board of the guild for the first time in 1646 (headman), Thomas Wyck in 1657 (headman), Frans Post in 1657 (treasurer), and Van der Vinne in 1661 (headman), all of whom were certainly – or in Wouwerman's case, possibly – portrayed by Hals.[41] Unfortunately, leaving aside the different approximate dates of these portraits, the connection does not work for Van der Cooghen, Job or Gerrit Berckheyde, who joined the board for the first time in 1668, 1682, and 1691 respectively, after Hals's death.[42] The thought nevertheless invites us to consider which prominent Haarlem artists served on the guild's board in the 1650s and the first half of the 1660s. Perhaps it will be possible in the future to link one or two of their names – Salomon van Ruysdael, Pieter de Molijn, Willem Heda, Cesar van Everdingen, Nicolaes Berchem, Jonas Suyderhoef, and Jan Vermeer van Haarlem, among others – to our distinguished group of Hals's presumed artist-sitters.[43]

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39 In 1883, Von Bode (1883, p. 92, no. 152) saw the painting (as c. 1650) in the collection of Francis Thomas de Grey Cowper, 7th Earl Cowper and 7th Baron Lucas, in Panshanger (Hertfordshire); on its provenance, see https://www.buehrle.ch/sammlung (accessed 8 December 2023).

40 Wheelock 1995, pp. 79–83, esp. 82, referring to Miedema 1980, p. 1060.

41 Ibid., pp. 1060–1062.

42 Ibid., pp. 1063, 1065, and 1066.

43 Ibid., pp. 1061–1062.

Technique

7. A Box Full of Research: Early Twentieth-Century Documentation on the Scientific Investigation and Restoration of the Eight Group Portraits by Frans Hals*

Mireille te Marvelde, Liesbeth Abraham, Herman van Putten, and Michiel Franken

Abstract: This paper outlines the historical and art historical context and significance of unique documentation concerning the restoration of the eight Hals group portraits at the Frans Hals Museum between 1911 and 1927. It explains the background and reasons for the research and its extensive documentation, as well as the importance of the material as the first interdisciplinary collaboration in the Netherlands between an art historian, restorers, and a chemist in relation to the cleaning of artworks. Besides written reports and photographs, the documentation includes a box of materials relating to scientific research, including samples of removed varnish and a set of colour photographs showing the cleaning process – the earliest such images in the history of conservation. During the recent conservation of Hals's three *Regent* portraits, the study of this historical documentation enabled a deeper understanding of the condition of the paintings and their material history, while also shedding light on early twentieth-century Dutch conservation and art history.

Keywords: Conservation History, Cleaning Controversy, Regeneration of Paintings, Interdisciplinary Collaboration, Early Scientific Documentation, Gerrit Gratama, Carel de Wild, Derix de Wild, Louis de Wild, Martin de Wild, Gosen van der Sleen

In the period 2013–17, three of Frans Hals's masterpieces – *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital* (1640–41), *Regents of the Old Men's Almshouse*, and *Regentesses of the*

* This paper was previously published in a somewhat different and shorter form under the title 'Past Treatments with a View to the Future: Early 20th-Century Restoration and Scientific Investigation of the Eight Group Portraits by Frans Hals in Haarlem', in ICOM-CC 18th Triennial Conference Preprints, Copenhagen, 4–8 September 2017, ed. J. Bridgland, art. 1909. Paris, International Council of Museums.

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Old Men's Almshouse (both probably 1664) – were investigated and restored at the Frans Hals Museum (see pp. 171–182 and 183–192). The research covered numerous aspects, which can be grouped into five main themes: Frans Hals's working methods and painting technique; historical and art historical aspects; phenomena and processes of natural ageing; the material history of the paintings; and treatment issues.[1]

The present paper discusses one aspect of this overall research, focusing on conservation history.[2] It outlines the art historical context and significance of the unique documentation relating to the major conservation campaign dedicated to the regents and civic guard portraits during the first quarter of the twentieth century. These treatments saw the involvement of a chemist for the first time in the Netherlands, in close collaboration with the museum director – who was both an artist and an art critic – and restorers. A cardboard box of research materials has a crucial role to play in better understanding the motivation for documenting the scientific investigation and treatment so extensively and the reasoning behind the decisions taken at the time.

Unique documentation

Between 1911 and 1927, the restorers Carel Frederik Louis de Wild (1870–1922), his brother Derix (1869–1932), and Derix's son Angenitus Martinus (1899–1969),

1 The recent research and treatment of the regents portraits was carried out by L. Abraham, M. te Marvelde, and H. van Putten, in close collaboration with researchers from different disciplines, among them Annelies van Loon, Jaap Boon, and Ariane van Suchtelen. Michiel Franken was involved in the conservation history of the paintings and is therefore a co-author of this essay. The project was supported by an advisory board. Midway through the project, the exhibition *Frans Hals: Work in Progress* – curated by Ariane van Suchtelen, in collaboration with the conservators and Neeltje Köhler – presented the ongoing research and treatment of the three regents portraits (13 June to 27 September 2015, Frans Hals Museum). A documentary on the project, *Closer to Hals*, made by Marcel van der Velde and Krista Arriëns, was broadcast by AVROTROS on 28 January 2018.

The Frans Hals regents research and conservation project was financed by BankGiro Loterij, Elisabeth van Thüringenfonds, Mondriaan Fonds, Prins Bernard Cultuurfonds (Atelierpraktijkenfonds), Friends of the Frans Hals Museum and IPERIONCH/EU ARCHLAB.

Collaboration with other institutions and projects: Amsterdam Museum; Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE), Delft University of Technology; Mauritshuis, The Hague; Scientific Department of the National Gallery, London; Noord-Hollands Archief; NWO project 'Paint Alterations in Time' (PAinT); Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; RKD-Netherlands Institute for Art History; University of Amsterdam; Washington & Lee University, Lexington (Virginia).

2 This part of the research was subsidized by the Atelierpraktijkenfonds of the Prins Bernard Cultuurfonds. The authors wish to thank Esther van Duijn for providing additional information, Joen Hermans for reading the report by Van der Sleen and interpreting the state of science in its time, and Peter van der Sleen to share information on his grandfather's brother and family history.

Fig. 1. Photograph of *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital* with information on condition marked in white and red by restorer Derix de Wild in 1918. Photograph: Berend Zweers. Frans Hals Museum Archive

occasionally assisted by Carel's son Louis (1900–1988), removed layers of varnish, overpaint, and retouches from the eight group portraits by Frans Hals. Diaries of these treatments are kept in the conservation studio of the Frans Hals Museum, as are photographs taken during treatment, some of them annotated with information regarding the condition of the painting in question (fig. 1). It was unusual at the time to document research and treatment in such an extensive way. Even more remarkable is the presence of a cardboard box labelled 'Items related to the cleaning of the Halses', which surfaced a few years before the regents conservation project started. This veritable time-capsule contains: old varnishes removed from the paintings and preserved in a vial, on a rag, between glass plates, or in test tubes; petri dishes containing paint and varnish on which chemical tests were done; glass negatives of a civic guard painting; and four block negatives ('clichés', a colour printing technique) of a detail of a civic guard painting and three autochromes in the original Lumière & Jougla box of the *Regentesses*, all made during varnish removal. The box also contains an album with photographs and descriptions of chemical tests relating to a report dating from 1921 by the chemist Dr Gosen van der Sleen (1872–1938), published in French in 1922 (fig. 2).[3] Another kind of documentation has likewise been preserved: strips of old varnish deliberately left on the paintings during restoration (fig. 3).

3 Van der Sleen 1922. The original typescript is kept at the conservation studio of the Frans Hals Museum.

Fig. 2. The cardboard box and its contents, as displayed in the exhibition *Frans Hals: Work in Progress*, Frans Hals Museum, Summer 2015. Photograph: Ton van der Heide

Fig. 3. *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital*, lower left corner of before restoration, showing strips of old varnish at the edges. Photograph: Frans Hals Museum conservation studio

Most of the materials in the box relate to research into the cleaning of the paintings. They turned out to be closely related to the extensive written and photographic documentation kept in the museum's conservation studio and archives. All the

written and photographic documentation was studied during the next conservation and research project for the civic guard portraits in the mid-1980s.[4] This resulted in an interesting overview of what had happened to the paintings over time. However, the discovery of the cardboard box of research materials more than 30 years later provided an opportunity to ask new questions concerning the creation and significance of *all* the documentation. The material was investigated in depth alongside the treatment of the regents portraits.

Historical background

What did the scientific research by Van der Sleen involve and what motivated director Gerrit David Gratama (1874–1965), the De Wilds, and Van der Sleen to carry out and record the research and restoration at a time when this was not yet standard practice in the Netherlands? To understand this, we have to go back to the beginning of the twentieth century, when the Frans Hals paintings were exhibited in Haarlem town hall. Since 1862, several rooms there had served as the Municipal Museum (which later became the Frans Hals Museum at its present location in 1913). Climate conditions were very poor due to changes in temperature and humidity, leakages, and soot from a stove. The latter meant that the paintings needed to be washed off with water regularly,[5] as result of which the varnishes had blanched: a phenomenon where a fine craquelure developed in the varnish layers, reducing transparency and hence causing a whitish haze on top of the paint layers (fig. 4). There were three methods to solve this problem, all of which are often referred to in sources generally as 'restoring varnish'.[6] One was to apply a new layer of varnish on top of the existing layer(s). This filled in all the small cracks and made the varnish transparent again. Another was to brush alcohol onto the surface, slightly dissolving the varnish and fusing the craquelure to restore the coherence of the varnish layers. A third approach was the 'Pettenkofer regeneration method', developed by

4 The restoration and research were carried out by Anne van Grevenstein and a group of young conservators. The conservation history was investigated by Koos Levy-Van Halm, while the scientific research was done by Karin Groen. See Middelkoop and Van Grevenstein 1989; Levy-Van Halm 2006.

5 Vos 1909. The worrying situation is also evident from various newspaper articles of that period; see, for example, C. Kickert, 'Frans Hals Museum – Wantoestanden', *Haarlems Dagblad*, 13 January 1909 (http://nha.courant.nu/issue/HD/1909-01-13/edition/0/page/1); *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 14 January 1909 (http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010336718:mpeg21:a0083); *De Tijd*, 15 January 1909 (http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010548616:mpeg21:a00550; report of the meeting of the Haarlem municipal council, *Haarlems Dagblad*, 4 February 1909 (http://nha.courant.nu/issue/HD/1909-02-04/edition/0/page/8); letter Commissie van Toezicht, *Haarlems Dagblad*, 9 February 1909 (http://nha.courant.nu/issue/HD/1909-02-09/edition/0/page/5).

6 Te Marvelde 2013.

Fig. 4. Detail of *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital* before treatment by restorer Derix de Wild in 1918. The varnish was extremely blanched and darkened. Photograph: Berend Zweers. Frans Hals Museum Archive

the German chemist Max von Pettenkofer (1818–1901), which entailed exposing a painting to alcohol vapour in a closed box. The varnish would then soften and the thin cracks in the varnish layer would merge, making it transparent again. To enhance this plasticizing effect, a layer of copaiba balsam – an oleoresin with a high concentration of natural plasticizers – could also be applied to the painting's existing varnish layers.[7]

The Frans Halses and other paintings in the Municipal Museum were regularly washed off with water, regenerated, and varnished, without removing the existing, strongly discoloured layers of varnish. As was the case elsewhere in Europe at the time, it was feared that using solvents to dissolve varnish risked contact with the paint layers. The steady addition of new layers of varnish, each of which yellowed with age, and the use of copaiba balsam that was already quite brown in itself, meant that the paintings had become very dark (fig. 5). The varnishes continually blanched, sparking heated discussions about whether to clean the paintings and, if

7 Schmitt 2021. Schmitt defended her PhD dissertation on this subject in 2019: http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/artdok/6341/, consulted 16 November 2023.

Fig. 5. Frans Hals paintings displayed in the old Town Hall of Haarlem, c. 1900. Two civic guard paintings on the right and the two late regents' portraits on the wall at the back. It is clear that the paintings have darkened significantly. Detail of a photograph by Berend Zweers, *Grote Museumzaal*. Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief, beeldcollectie van de gemeente Haarlem (inv. no. 14844)

so, how to go about it. We can conclude from this fierce debate that the Netherlands witnessed its first true 'cleaning controversy' at this point.[8]

Controversies of this kind have been reported since antiquity, the main issue invariably being whether paintings are damaged as a result of cleaning.[9] Conservation did not become an independent profession until the mid-nineteenth century, before which it mostly remained a sideline for painters. Little was known about how to remove varnish layers safely, while it had become clear that the experimental approach to cleaning adopted in previous eras had resulted in some significant damage. Having become aware of this, fear of causing damage or making existing damage worse had become one of the reasons why by the mid-nineteenth century paintings were barely cleaned any more, leaving them very yellow and even dark brown. At the same time, people grew accustomed to the dark appearance – the 'gallery tone'

8 This information is based on a wide variety of sources kept in the archives of the Frans Hals Museum and the C.F.L. de Wild and A.M. de Wild archives at the Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD). The issue was also widely discussed in various newspapers and magazine articles of the time. See also Van Duijn and Te Marvelde 2024 (first published as Van Duijn and Te Marvelde 2016); Levy-Van Halm 2006 and Erftemeijer 2013, pp. 232–235.

9 On cleaning controversies, see Bomford and Leonard 2004, esp. pp. 424–547.

as it was termed – of Old Master paintings. From the end of the eighteenth century onwards, fondness for the visual characteristics of ageing also grew in line with a developing historical awareness. Towards the end of that century, the British artist Sir George Beaumont (1753–1827) stated that: 'A good painting, like a good violin, should be brown.'[10] A century later, many paintings must have looked this way.

The first European cleaning controversy to attract wider public attention occurred in London in the mid-nineteenth century, when the National Gallery cleaned many of its yellowed paintings. Other cases arose in Europe in the years that followed. Generally speaking, there were two opposing camps. One felt that paintings ought not to be cleaned, arguing that artists had expected the varnish to take on a yellow tone and that cleaning risked causing damage. The other camp argued in favour of cleaning, taking the view that discoloured and blanched varnish detracted from the artistic quality of the work.[11]

The discussions in Haarlem followed similar lines to all the other cleaning controversies that arose at the time in Europe. In 1909, the restorer Frans J.A. Vos (1847–1921), who had worked on the Haarlem municipal collections for almost four decades, was suddenly ordered to halt his work on the Frans Hals group portraits. He was accused of damaging the paintings due to his unorthodox way of regenerating them without following Von Pettenkofer's method. Four Haarlem artists wrote a letter to a newspaper to condemn Vos's practice in the strongest terms, also citing aesthetic considerations. Today, they declared, the paintings 'shine on the viewer like lacquered tea trays' and 'the thickening brown layer obscures the pure aspect of the smooth, cool painting more and more'.[12]

Arguments about what had happened to the paintings grew so heated and urgent that questions were actually raised in parliament.[13] Vos wrote an essay defending himself, which was published in the same year, but he received no further assignments from the museum.[14] He also reported that his neurologist had advised him not to carry out any further work, so affected had he been by the controversy. The board of supervisors of the museum, which included the prominent art historians Abraham Bredius (1855–1946) and Prof. Jan Six (1857–1926), asked two experts, both restorers, to investigate the condition of

10 Ibid., p. 429.

11 Ibid.

12 '...den toeschouwer tegenglimmen als gelakte theeblaadjes [...en dat...] de aldoor dikker geworden bruinige laag het zuivere aspect der vlotte, koele schildering steeds meer vertroebelen'. Letter to *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 10 April 1909, signed by Jan Veth (1864–1925), H. van der Poll (1877–1963), C.G. 't Hooft (1866–1936), and G.W. Dijsselhof (1866–1924).

13 Letter from the Minister of Internal Affairs, 5 May 1909. Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief, NL-HlmNHA_1374_10_0508.

14 Vos 1909.

the Frans Hals paintings, to judge the effects of Vos's treatments, and to advise on how the affected varnishes ought to be treated. One of them was Carel de Wild, who was very successful in his field and, unusually for the time, boasted a considerable knowledge of chemistry.[15]

De Wild's extensive and detailed assessment was published in 1910. He reported that the treatments in the preceding decades had not been performed 'the right way' and considered it necessary to 'put an end to this unsavoury situation' (regarding the condition of the paintings). The negative impact of the treatments had, however, been limited to the upper layers of varnish and had not caused any harm to the paint layers.[16] De Wild advised that the old and recent layers of varnish be removed, as well as the retouches and overpaint. His recommendation divided the board members. While Bredius supported De Wild, Six had reservations and another member, the painter Anton L. Koster (1859–1937), felt that the method of varnish removal ought first to be examined further.

Because of this disagreement and the fear of damage to the paint, one of Haarlem's town councillors proposed that a special committee be set up which, in addition to two art experts, should also include two chemists.[17] It was very unusual at the time to involve experts of this kind in a restoration project and the council ultimately rejected the proposal. It did finally agree, however, to commission Carel de Wild to remove the layers of varnish and copaiba balsam from Hals's *Regents of the Old Men's Almshouse*, a task completed to everyone's satisfaction in 1911. In light of the foregoing, it is striking that De Wild chose to apply a coloured final varnish: the time was clearly not yet ripe to see the paintings without a yellow filter.

Carel de Wild emigrated to the United States at the end of 1911 and so the restoration of the remaining Hals paintings was suspended for a while. In the meantime, the municipal collection had moved from the town hall to the renovated former Old Men's Almshouse, where it was renamed the Frans Hals Museum with Gratama as its director. Restoration of the Halses was resumed in 1918 when, on the recommendation of Wilhelm Martin (1876–1954), director of the Mauritshuis, Carel's brother Derix was commissioned to clean the *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital* (fig. 6).[18] Gratama invited numerous people to the studio to witness the cleaning

15 Van Duijn and Te Marvelde 2024, pp. 251–252; De Wild 1909 and De Wild 1910.

16 De Wild 1910, pp. 51 and 42. See also Erftemeijer 2013, pp. 232–234.

17 Several newspapers reported on 14 February 1911 that city councillor E.H. Krelage proposed setting up a committee of experts that would include two experts in painting as well as two chemists. The purpose of the committee would be to investigate whether the Hals paintings need to be treated and, if so, whether this could be done without risk according to the instructions of De Wild. See for example: *De Tijd*, 15 February 1911
(http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010546353:mpeg21:a0046); see also Dake 1916, pp. 45–50.

18 Gratama 1918, pp. 245–246.

Fig. 6. Derix de Wild in front of the last painting he treated, *Regentesses of the Old Men's Almshouse* during varnish removal, c. 1926. Photograph by Gosen van der Sleen or Berend Zweers (kindly provided by Claus Grimm). Frans Hals Museum Archive

and restoration process and to prepare them for the visual change.[19] The response to the treatment was largely positive, although there was also some criticism on the brightness of the painting, including from Barthold van Riemsdijk (1850–1942) the director of the Rijksmuseum. Despite this, Derix was commissioned to restore another group portrait by Hals, his earliest civic guard painting, dated 1616 (see p. 214, fig. 2). The assignment was accompanied by a request on Gratama's part that the chemist Van der Sleen carry out scientific investigation in support.

Motives

Van der Sleen's report shows that the immediate reason for the request was the criticism levelled against the removal of varnish from the *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital.* People found it hard to get used to the painting's new appearance. 'Some went as far as to state that the paintings had suffered and rumour had it that not only had the varnish been removed, but also the paint, in particular a glaze, which

19 The diary that Derix de Wild kept during the treatment gives precise information about who visited the studio and when.

Fig. 7. Varnish, dissolved from the Frans Hals paintings during the 1918–19 restorations, preserved in test tubes, between glass plates, in a vial and on a rag. Photograph: René Gerritsen, Kunst- en Onderzoeksfotografie

Frans Hals had supposedly applied', Gratama stated in the foreword to the report.[20] The objections to cleaning and accusations of damage to Hals's work expressed in 1918 are in line with the many European cleaning controversies. All the same, it was genuinely innovative to have a chemist analyse the removed varnish to see if it contained traces of paint, as the opponents of cleaning suggested. Having examined the dissolved varnish from the civic guard painting, Van der Sleen concluded that no original paint had been removed (fig. 7).

Van der Sleen's research went much further, however, than this single conclusion. Those opposed to varnish removal stuck resolutely to the Pettenkofer regeneration method, which had become popular in the Netherlands since 1871 and had been used repeatedly on the Haarlem paintings. Avoiding the application of solvents directly to the varnish layer was considered a major advantage of this method. Moreover, by regenerating the varnishes rather than removing them, the paintings retained the yellow colour that so many cherished. Over the years, however, it became clear that this was not a durable method. Before long, the defect returned and the varnishes blanched again. Gratama deemed it important to find a chemical explanation for the method's failure. In his report, Van der Sleen discussed and criticized von

20 Van der Sleen 1922, p. 135.

Pettenkofer's work in depth. He concluded that, in chemical terms, regeneration did not repair the old varnish, which in the long run would have to be removed anyway.[21] This conclusion and the finding that the treatment had not damaged any of the original paint allowed the removal of the varnish from the civic guard painting to go ahead, followed by the other group portraits by Frans Hals. Besides wishing to account for their actions, Gratama and the restorers also clearly felt the need to understand ageing processes and their significance for the treatment and conservation of paintings.

Van der Sleen's research material contains an album of photographs showing various experiments that were used in his publication and some of the actual petri dishes seen in the photographs. He performed tests with solvents on several types of varnish to ascertain what caused blanching in varnish layers and which type of varnish suffered least from damp. The report describes in depth the chemistry of oil paint and the drying of oil; the cause of craquelure; the influence of damp and air pollution on fresh and aged varnish; and what causes varnish to yellow. It also considers the distinction between original paint and overpaint and differences in solubility between aged oil paint and varnish, which make it possible to separate the two. At the same time, Van der Sleen examined the influence of yellowed varnish on colour perception. The diversity of this research clearly shows that its scope went further than simply justifying the selected treatment to the outside world.

There was another motive for producing such extensive documentation: the need to visually illustrate the benefits of removing the yellowed varnish. Director Gratama and the De Wilds were great advocates of complete varnish removal. After completing the restoration of the *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital* in 1918, Gratama wistfully wrote: 'May the daylight soon shine on all, so that the falsehood of the past will at last make way for the truth of the present, and the paintings will shine again in their own beautiful colours, not with the borrowed paint which time has conjured up through yellowed varnish.'[22] A new photographic technique was used to show in colour how much the discoloured and partly blanched varnish hindered the view of the paint layers. Autochromes – colour positives on glass, invented in 1903 by the cinema pioneers Auguste and Louis Lumière – could be projected as slides and Gratama must have used them in the many lectures he gave on the restoration of the Halses.[23] Autochrome was the first procedure to make colour photography possible. Its use in this restoration project shows the importance placed on the ability to illustrate the argument visually. The autochromes showing the *Regentesses*

21 The fact that the regeneration method has a tendency to swell paint layers was not yet an issue at the time. During the recent treatment the possible impact of regeneration was addressed with great care. The complexity of this subject is beyond the scope of this essay.

22 Gratama 1918, p. 252.

23 *Algemeen Dagblad*, 10 December 1918.

Fig. 8. *Regentesses of the Old Men's Alms House* during varnish removal in 1926. Autochrome by Gosen van der Sleen (1872–1938). Photograph: René Gerritsen, Kunst- en Onderzoeksfotografie

during varnish removal are quite possibly the earliest photographs anywhere in the world to record in colour the removal of varnish from a painting (fig. 8).

Other materials stored in the cardboard box likewise served to demonstrate the benefits of removing the yellowed varnish. They include a frame holding two glass plates with removed varnish between them (fig. 9). This very frame has been

Fig. 9. A frame holding two glass plates with removed varnish in between them, kept in the cardboard box. Photograph: René Gerritsen, Kunst- en Onderzoeksfotografie

Fig. 10. Director G.D. Gratama holds the frame shown in fig. 9, in front of the white sleeve of the *Regents of the Old Men's Alms House* during the Frans Hals exhibition in 1937, illustrating to Minister of Foreign Affairs H.A. van Karnebeek the effect of the varnish removal. Photograph: Frans Hals Museum Archive

Fig. 11. Detail of lower left corner of *Banquet of the officers of the St George Civic Guard*, 1616. Strip of varnish layers left behind by De Wild. Photograph: René Gerritsen, Kunst- en Onderzoeksfotografie

identified in a photograph dating from 1941. It shows an older Gratama holding it in front of the white sleeve of the *Regents of the Old Men's Almshouse* to illustrate the effect of the varnish removal 30 years earlier to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Herman Adriaan van Karnebeek (1874–1942) (fig. 10).

The strips of old varnish left on the paintings could also show the results of varnish removal to the public (fig. 11), while some old varnish was left around the edges as well, concealed by the frame. This fact, together with the preservation of a vial and a rag with the removed varnish in the box (fig. 7), suggests that this material was saved in part for examination by future generations.

The importance of the documentation

All this documentation – the research material, the publications and newspaper articles – interpreted in the historical context, has given us a better understanding of the reasoning of the director and the restorers, the decisions that were taken, their level of knowledge, and the close, very modern, interdisciplinary collaboration between them. All of this proved especially useful during the recent restoration. To a large extent, the treatment performed by Derix and Martin de Wild and the reasoning behind it could be followed by comparing the observations made during the conservation campaign of 2013–17 with the notes in the diaries of past treatments and all the other preserved material. It was possible to identify what had been removed by the De Wilds (in terms of varnish, overpaint, and retouching) and what they left behind. In this way, a better understanding was obtained of the condition of the paintings that they were confronted with at the time and, consequently, of the condition that the conservators encountered during the recent treatment.

An example is provided by the conspicuous white spots that were present in the varnish of the *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital.* These turned out to be the blanched remains of an older varnish that the De Wilds had not removed. They were located under the upper varnish layers and were optically comparable to the blanching that Van der Sleen had photographed (figs. 12–13). It was thus understood at an early stage that the De Wilds had not gone as far with the cleaning as they themselves had thought. During the removal of varnish layers in 1918, remnants of an older layer must have been temporarily regenerated as a result of the contact with the solvents used, thereby becoming transparent and invisible to them. Without microscopes and UV lamps such remnants could not easily be observed. They blanched again later and in the same way, displaying the same phenomenon that had confronted the De Wilds at the time. These remains could now be recognized and understood.

Fig. 12. Detail of *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital* with blanched remains of varnish (2013). Photograph: Frans Hals Museum conservation studio

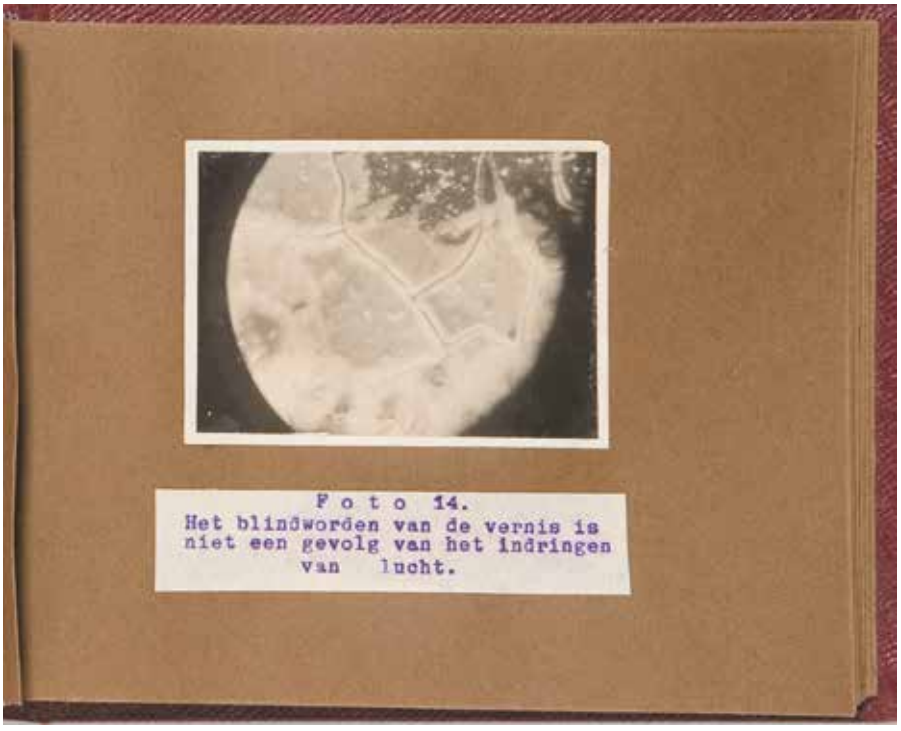

Fig. 13. Gosen van der Sleen's photograph (1921) with a similar phenomenon as in fig. 12. Photograph: René Gerritsen, Kunst- en Onderzoeksfotografie

Not only did Derix and Martin de Wild allow us to gain a better understanding of the condition of the paintings, they also created the possibility of analysing the material history of the works before their time. To give an example: there were signs of damage in the paint layer under the strips of varnish that had been left behind – damage, therefore, that had appeared before the whole package of varnish layers had been applied. By leaving these remnants, the De Wilds not only made it possible for us and for other future conservators to study their own treatment, but also previous ones. They also left scope for further research in the future. The remains of old varnish were analysed, which gave us an idea of the composition of the material on the paintings before the beginning of the twentieth century. These remains also gave an impression of the visual impact that the discolouration of the varnish must have had on the paintings. They had become extremely dark and hard to interpret, which raised questions about the perception and interpretation of artists and art historians at the time.

The material in the box and all the related documentation is a rich resource for an important period in the history of conservation, which has already led to a number of new insights. It was possible to some extent to follow the restorers' ideas about cleaning paintings and how far they took them. Their attitude and questions differ less from what occupies conservators today than was previously believed. The De Wilds showed a fairly high degree of scientific knowledge. They had a good basic understanding of chemistry and were well abreast of international literature in the field of paint technology.[24] They must also have introduced the subject matter to Van der Sleen who, as a bacteriologist, was not yet familiar with it. In his report, Van der Sleen discussed the most important specialist literature, primarily German and British. He also mentioned several aspects that Carel de Wild had already described in a 1909 publication concerning the use of copaiba balsam as a picture varnish.[25] His research must have been carried out in close cooperation with the De Wilds and Gratama, making it a very early example of interdisciplinary collaboration.

It will by no means have been a coincidence that this cooperation inspired Derix's son Martin de Wild (nineteen years old in 1918) to study chemistry (fig. 14). He began his studies during the project and gained his PhD with 'The Scientific Examination of Pictures' at the Technical University in Delft soon after in 1928.[26] His dissertation was translated into English in 1929 and two years later into German. It was widely disseminated and is still used today. For the purposes of his research, he was allowed to take paint samples and X-ray images of paintings in Dutch and international collections, which was not at all common at the time.

24 Van Duijn and Te Marvelde 2024.
25 De Wild 1909.
26 De Wild 1928.

Fig. 14. Martin de Wild, c. 1935–41. Photograph: Vereenigde Fotobureaux, RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History, ARC/Archive A.M. de Wild

Fig. 15. Cliché of a detail of *Banquet of the Officers of the St George Civic Guard*, 1616, as printed in Martin de Wild's dissertation 'The Scientific Examination of Pictures'. Cliché by Joh. Enschedé and Sons, Haarlem

He also took paint samples from the Frans Hals paintings and published the results in his dissertation, making him the first person in the Netherlands to carry out such research. The Hals restoration project clearly provided him with lots of interesting research material and he illustrated his study with images taken during the treatment of the Hals paintings. The four clichés of a detail of a civic guard painting kept in the cardboard box were used to print this detail in colour (four colours printed on top of each other) facing the title page of his dissertation (fig. 15). In the first chapter, he emphasizes the importance of the scientific analysis of paintings to complement art historical research, something that was little acknowledged or practised at the time. Martin de Wild went on to become a very important international figure in conservation – as well as in what we now call conservation science – and remained such throughout his career, until his death in the late 1960s.[27]

The importance of the research material and documentation also lies, finally, in the fact that it is physical evidence that the involvement of the public in the conservation of art had begun to play a bigger role in the Netherlands. The photographic material made it possible to demonstrate the results of cleaning paintings to a wide circle of people. Not only could the public at large be informed in this way, but the material was also used for specialist publications in the Netherlands and abroad.[28] All this documentary material is of considerable importance to art history. The photographs offer an insight into what contemporary art historians saw before the paintings were cleaned, allowing us to interpret the art historical conclusions of the time more effectively.

Conclusion

Combining information from written sources, photographic documentation, the report and accompanying materials preserved in the box by Van der Sleen and the De Wilds, and the examination of Frans Hals's paintings themselves has enhanced our understanding of an important phase in Dutch conservation history and hence in art history more widely. In this period, scientific investigation of paintings for the purpose of restoration clearly played a role for the first time in the Netherlands. The need to justify treatment involving varnish removal advanced the development of scientific research and led to the more extensive documentation of conservation interventions, something that only became common practice much later. While the museum director Gratama and the De Wild family of restorers evidently wanted to

27 Van Duijn and Te Marvelde 2024, pp. 256–260.

28 For example, Laurie 1925.

account for their actions to the outside world, they also shared a scientific interest, were eager to understand the original appearance of the paintings, and shared a long-term vision on conservation.

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8. The New York *Malle Babbe*: Original, Studio Work, or Forgery?*

Anna Tummers, Arie Wallert, Robert G. Erdmann, Katja Kleinert, Babette Hartwieg, Dorothy Mahon, Silvia Centeno, Roger Groves, Andrei Anisimov, and Joris Dik

Abstract: Quite a few of the most innovative and best-known paintings by Frans Hals exist in several variants. Attributing some of these versions or imitations is a notoriously difficult challenge. A case in point is the *Malle Babbe* painting at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, which has a rich attribution history: it has been called an original Frans Hals, a work by one of his sons, an early imitation with a forged signature, and even a modern forgery. This case study sheds new light on its attribution by comparing its style, technique and materials in depth to the well-known original by Frans Hals in Berlin and to the *Malle Babbe* forgery created by Han van Meegeren at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, and by relating it to relevant primary sources and seventeenth-century art theory. New technical research was done on all three paintings specifically for this study, including infrared reflectography (IRR), macro X-ray fluorescence scanning (MA-XRF), hyperspectral imaging or reflectance imaging spectroscopy (HI/RIS) and lead isotope analysis. Advanced digital tools were developed to aid the comparison.

Keywords: Old Master Painting, 17th century, Workshop Practice, Authenticity and Attribution of Paintings, Painting Technique, Technical Analysis, Digital Tools, Barbara Claes, Frans Hals, Gustave Courbet, Han van Meegeren

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DOI: 10.5117/9789048566068_CH08

Fig. 1. Style of Frans Hals, *Malle Babbe*, c. 1625–50. Canvas, 74.9 × 61 cm. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art (acc. no. 71.76). This essay offers new insights as to the attribution and dating.

Fig. 2. Frans Hals, *Malle Babbe,* before 1646. Canvas, 78.5 × 66.2 cm. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (cat. no. 801 C)

The storage area of the Metropolitan Museum in New York contains a painting that is rarely on display in the gallery: *Malle Babbe* (or: Mad Barbara) (fig. 1). It clearly bears a relation to Hals's famous painting of the same woman *Malle Babbe* in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin, one of Hals's most beloved genre pictures, celebrated for both its innovative topic and its virtuoso painting technique (fig. 2). It is the first portrait-like depiction of a woman with mental illness in the history of art. Yet the exact nature of the relationship between the two pictures, and thus the attribution of the New York painting, has not

Fig. 3. Jan Steen, *As the Old Sing, so the Young Pipe*, c. 1663. Canvas, 81.1 × 100.5 cm. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (cat. no. 795 D)

been definitively established. It is a familiar challenge for Hals scholars: a lot of variants exist of his most well-known paintings and it can be very challenging to attribute such a picture. Is it a different version created by the master himself, a workshop product or rather a later imitation? His so-called genre paintings in particular – that is, his depictions of people who did not commission him to paint their portrait, such as those of Malle Babbe, a street musician, or laughing children – exist in many variants. These life-size portrayals of unassuming and/or marginalized persons in society constitute one of his most important innovations in the art of painting.[1] No one had depicted these people so prominently and in such a lifelike way before. Hals had a unique ability to capture fleeting moments on his canvases, such as a spontaneous laugh, a subtle smile, or furtive glance, making his subjects appear as if we encounter them in real life in a very specific moment in time.[2] His paintings of this type must have been well

1 Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 2013, p. 9.

2 On this effect, often referred to as the 'snapshot'-like quality of his paintings and the relation to seventeenth-century art theory, see also A. Tummers, 'Frans Hals: "rightly admired by the Greatest Painters"' in Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 2013, pp. 13–40.

known in his own time. Quite a few fellow painters cited precisely these innovative character types in their own work (fig. 3); the pictures were often reproduced in print and their popularity might also explain the existence of many variants.[3]

Attribution debate

The attribution of the New York *Malle Babbe* has long been an issue of debate. It entered the collection of the Metropolitan Museum in 1871 as a valuable original painting by Frans Hals, one of the purchases of which the museum was proudest that year.[4] When the museum first opened to the public in 1872, it was even considered – in the absence of a Rembrandt painting – one of its most important works.[5] Already in 1883, however, the German art historian and museum director Wilhelm von Bode had classified it as a free repetition by Frans Hals's son Frans Hals the Younger (1618–1669) after the Berlin picture.[6] His Dutch colleagues Ernst Wilhelm Moes and Cornelis Hofstede de Groot nevertheless maintained that the painting was an original by the master himself in their monographs on Frans Hals (published in 1909 and 1910, respectively).[7] Moes speculated that Hals must have known Babbe personally and painted her after life, and Hofstede de Groot was the first art historian to state that this painting was the version etched by Louis Bernard Coclers (1741–1817) (fig. 4). Likewise, the German-American art historian Wilhelm Valentiner attributed the painting to Frans Hals himself in his oeuvre catalogues of 1921, 1923, and 1936.[8] Nevertheless, Metropolitan curator Bryson Burroughs claimed in 1931 that 'most authorities, including Bode and de Groot, consider the Museum's picture the work of someone close to Hals, probably Frans Hals the Younger'.[9] The first Hals overview exhibition in the Netherlands in 1937 intensified the debate. While the painting was on display as an authentic Hals in the exhibition in Haarlem, many of the attributions in the show were openly questioned and conservator Maurits van Dantzig even dismissed the New York *Malle Babbe* as a downright forgery in the book he wrote in response to the exhibition, titled *Frans Hals. Echt of Onecht?* (Frans Hals: Real or fake?).[10]

3 Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 2017, pp. 14, 15, 53, and 54. The most complete overview of citations of and prints after Hals's various paintings can be found in Slive 2014.

4 Jacquemart 1871, pl. 1, as by Hals.

5 *Catalogue of the Pictures in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York 1872, pp. 54–55, no. 144, as 'Hille Bobbe Von Haarlem': 'this capital chef d'oeuvre of science, color, spirit, life, and boldness would do honor to any museum.' See also Baetjer 2004, pp. 178–179 and 217–218, no. 144.

6 Von Bode 1883, p. 103.

7 Moes 1909, pp. 64–65, III, no. 261; Hofstede de Groot 1910, p. 30, no. 109.

8 Valentiner 1921, pp. 130 (ill.), 315; Valentiner 1923, pp. 141 (ill.), 316; Valentiner 1936, unpaginated, no. 57 (ill.).

9 Burroughs 1931, p. 152, no. H161-I.

10 Van Dantzig 1937, p. 103, no. 62.

Fig. 4. Louis Bernard Coclers (1740–1817) after Frans Hals, *Malle Babbe*, between 1756 and 1817. Etching, 158 × 127 mm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-1883-A-7104)

The two main Hals scholars of the second half of the twentieth century, Professor Seymour Slive at Harvard and his German peer Professor Claus Grimm, continued the debate. Slive stated in 1962 that the picture is the closest of the known versions to the painting in Berlin, adding that 'whether it is by the master himself or a brilliant follower is debatable', and rejected the attribution to Frans Hals the Younger.[11] In his extensive oeuvre catalogue of 1970–74, he subsequently dismissed the attribution to Hals entirely and considered it 'the invention of a gifted follower or a copy after a lost original'.[12] In 1974, Claus Grimm listed the work among problematic pictures ascribed to Hals in the past, thus confirming its de-attribution.[13] Indeed, the picture does not feature in his oeuvre catalogue of 1989, though he recently added it to his latest oeuvre catalogue as a painting created in Hals's workshop.[14] Metropolitan

11 S. Slive in Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 1962, p. 49.

12 Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, p. 141, no. D34. Slive also lists two other versions of *Malle Babbe*, D35 and D36, which are much cruder in style and do not date from the seventeenth century: Follower of Hals, *Seated Woman* (canvas, 72 × 59 cm), Lille, Musée des Beaux-Arts; Follower of Hals, *Seated Woman Holding a Jug* (canvas, 65 × 60 cm), formerly New York, Jack Linsky. A technical examination of the Lille painting revealed pigments that were not available to Hals; see Slive 2014, p. 188, figs. 128–129.

13 Grimm and Montagni 1974, p. 95, no. 71.

14 Grimm 1989 and correspondence with the author. Grimm's latest oeuvre catalogue will be published online through the RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History in The Hague (Grimm 2023).

Fig. 5. Han van Meegeren (1889–1947), *Malle Babbe*, 1930–40. Canvas 76 × 60 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. SK-A-4242)

curator Walter Liedtke described the picture as 'by a contemporary follower' in 1990 and speculated that the signature was forged.[15] In the museum's collection catalogue of 2007, he listed it as 'style of Frans Hals', dated it to the second half of the seventeenth century, and rejected the attribution to Hals's sons Frans, Harmen (1611–1669) and Jan (c. 1620–1654) as well as to other artists in Hals's circle, concluding that – like Slive – he was 'unable to offer a plausible attribution'.[16]

In short, the Metropolitan *Malle Babbe* has been classified as an original by the master, a studio work, a work by a contemporary follower, a copy after a lost original, and even as a (partial) forgery. In order to get more insight into its attribution, we have, on the one hand, compared its subject, design, style, technique, and use of materials closely to Frans Hals's well-known original at the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin, and, on the other hand, contrasted it with a *Malle Babbe* forgery by Han van Meegeren at the Rijksmuseum (fig. 5). Furthermore, we have related our observations to relevant primary sources and seventeenth-century art theory.

15 W. Liedtke, 'Dutch Paintings in America: The Collectors and their Ideals', in Cat. Exhib. The Hague / San Francisco 1990–91, pp. 14–58, esp. 33, fig. 19.

16 Liedtke 2007, vol. 1, no. 69, pp. 299–301, esp. 299.

An early depiction of a woman who was mentally ill

As briefly mentioned above, Frans Hals's *Malle Babbe* is exceptional in that it depicts a woman who was mentally ill, life-size, with recognizable features, grinning broadly and painted with very loose, *virtuoso* brushwork. Her name, 'Malle Babbe' ('Mad Barbara'), has come down to us through an old inscription on the back of the stretcher of the Berlin canvas (part of an old stretcher that was reinserted into a more modern one) (fig. 6).[17] She is also mentioned in the only surviving financial document of the Haarlem Workhouse, which was both a house of correction and a charitable institution. In 1653, the Haarlem Burgomasters allowed 65 guilders for the care of 'Malle Babbe'. Hals's mentally impaired son Pieter (d. 1667) is mentioned in the same document; he had been confined in the same institution since 1642 and was supported with 35 guilders.[18] Babbe's full name was discovered in 2013. A document dated 17 February 1646 mentions that 'Barbar alias Malle Barbar' was brought to the Workhouse by the captain in charge of the nightwatch in order to prevent 'all further instances of disgrace and dishonour that could occur if nothing was done against it' – suggesting that she had behaved indecently or yelled dishonourable things in the streets of Haarlem – and that she was kept there and would work at the regents' discretion.[19] As of 1646, the regents of the local hospital, the St. Elisabeth Gasthuis, paid 65 guilders each year for the care of Malle Babbe, who is called 'Barbara Claes' from 1656 onwards. The last payment dates from 1663 and in the margin her death is indicated with the note 'obiit'.

Fig. 6. Inscription on the back of the Berlin *Malle Babbe* (fig. 2) photographed in 1956

17 The full inscription reads: 'Malle Babbe van Haerlem … Fr(a)ns Hals'. The present lining and stretcher date back to before the acquisition for Berlin in 1874; on the reverse of the lining canvas there is an old Netherlandish inscription, suggesting that the relining was done in the Netherlands.

18 Van Thiel-Stroman 1989–90, p. 295, doc. no. 94; Van Thiel-Stroman in Köhler 2006, p. 179 and p. 182, n. 38. At the request of her parents in 1642, Hals's oldest daughter Sara was also incarcerated for some time in the Workhouse, on account of fornication; see Van Thiel-Stroman in Köhler 2006, p. 183, n. 39.

19 These documents were discovered by Floris Mulder and presented in a focus exhibition at the Dolhuis Museum, Haarlem in 2013; see Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief (NHA), acc. no. 3305, *Sint Elisabeths Gasthuis of Groote Gasthuis te Haarlem*, no. 37, Alimony registers 1646–1680, BR, red 221, fol. 661: 'alle vordere swarichheden van schande en oneere die soude mogen onstaen in gevalle daertegens niet en werde gedaen'.

Barbara Claes, or Malle Babbe, is thus a well-documented early example of a person who was mentally ill. She was a very unusual and therefore innovative topic for a life size painting and her picture appears to have been appreciated for exactly that reason already in the seventeenth century – hence the early mentions of her nickname. The provenance history of the painting can in all likelihood be traced back to seventeenth-century Amsterdam. In 1689 the ironmonger Cornelis van Driessche sold 28 paintings to a certain Leendert van Dulcken, one of which is described as 'Malle Babbe, by Frans Hals'.[20] An earlier Amsterdam inventory possibly describes the painting as well. The 1648 inventory of the hat maker Lambers Hermansz Blaeuw mentions a painting depicting 'een geck' (a lunatic or fool) by Frans Hals that was appraised by the painter Johannes Collaert at 10 guilders.[21] As the description is very brief, it is hard to determine if it refers to Malle Babbe, a theatrical fool such as Pekelhaering, or Hals's painting of Verdonck (p. 219, fig. 5), known through a contemporary print as: 'This is Verdonck, that outspoken fellow, / whose jawbone attacks one and all, / he paid heed to no one great or small / and so he was consigned to the workhouse'.[22] Although Verdonck was not explicitly called 'mad' like Barbara, he might have been mentally ill as well. In any case, the print further confirms the interest of Hals and his contemporaries in remarkable local characters, while underscoring Hals's light-hearted, humorous approach.[23] In Malle Babbe's case, the owl on her shoulder emphasizes her folly – owls were common attributes of fools at the time.[24] Interestingly, Hals must have painted at least one other version of Malle Babbe, a painting showing her smoking, which features as a pendant to Hals's *Peeckelhaering* (c. 1628–30) in Jan Steen's Berlin painting *As the Old Sing, so the Young Pipe*, dated to around 1663 (fig. 3). Frans Hals presumably painted his *Peeckelhaering* for a popular artists' tavern, the Coninck

20 Getty Provenance Index Archival Inventory N-273; Amsterdam City Archives (ACA), acc. no. 5075, *Notarissen ter Standplaats Amsterdam*, notary Leendert Fruijt, inv. no. 3909 (film 4005), pp. 165–167, 13 June 1689.

21 'N°. 1. een schilderij, zijnde een geck, met een swart vergulde lijst, geschildert door Frans Halst – f 10:–:–'; Montias Database: ACA, acc. no. 5075, notary Frans Uyttenbogaert, inv. no. 1914, 16 May 1648, p. 399 (scan no. 272); Van Thiel-Stroman 1989–90, p. 402, doc. no. 126; see also Bredius 1927, p. 21. An early eighteenth-century Haarlem inventory also mentions twice 'een gek' by Frans Hals, valued at low prices, respectively 1:10:– |c f and –:10:– |c f.; see Getty Provenance Index, N-4993. Alternatively, the inventory could also refer to a depiction of the local character called 'Boontje'; see note 23.

22 'Verdonck, die stoute gast / wiens kaekebeen elck een aen tast, / op niemand, groot, noch kleijn, hij past, / dies raeckte hij in 't werkhuis vast'; translation taken from Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 2013, p. 118.

23 On seventeenth-century humour, see also Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 2017. Research for the Frans Hals exhibition in London and Amsterdam (2023–24) unearthed an eighteenth-century source suggesting that Hals's well-known *Rommelpot-player* depicts a man called 'Boontje', who was 'at the time a well-known fool in Haarlem (in dien tijd een bekend gekje te Haarlem)'; see F. Lammertse in Cat. Exhib. London / Amsterdam 2023–24, pp. 181–184.

24 See Slive in Cat. Exhib. Washington / London / Haarlem 1989–90, pp. 239–241. Ironically, owls could also refer to wisdom at the time as they were also the attribute of the Greco-Roman goddess of wisdom Athena/Minerva.

van Vranckrijck (the King of France) in the Smedestraat in Haarlem, where it is listed in an inventory dated 1631.[25] His *Malle Babbe smoking* might have been its pendant there. After all, smoking and drinking are an inn's *raison d'être*, and two foolish characters doing just that would have made a witty pair.[26]

Although it is hard to determine exactly to which version the early inventories refer, the precise spelling of Malle Babbe's name in the 1689 inventory and on the back of the Berlin painting make the latter a likely candidate.[27] Since the auction of 1867, the inscription on the reverse of the Berlin painting was, however, repeatedly misread as: 'Hille Bobbe van Haerlem f. Frans Hals' (fig. 6).[28] The fact that this inscription was considered important and trustworthy is shown by the fact that Léopold Flameng placed it under the depiction of the Malle Babbe in his etching after the original in 1869 as a kind of poignant quotation (fig. 7).[29] Moreover, after its entry into the Gemäldegalerie, it was included in the Berlin directories as a signature replacement and believed to be 'by the painter's own hand'.[30] A former owner of the painting, Barthold Suermondt, was also sure that the inscription came from Frans Hals himself.[31] Although the inscription is nowadays no longer attributed to Hals himself, it does appear to be very old. However, as Suermondt noted in a letter to Bode, instead of 'Hille Bobbe' it can also be read 'Hille Babbe'.[32] And, as the transcription of the inscription from 1883 already suggests, the sitter's name must originally have been read as 'Malle Babbe'.[33] This would also explain why the eighteenth-century mentions of the painting all read 'Malle Babbe van Haarlem'.[34]

25 *Lijste van verscheijden schilderijen toebehoorende Heijnderick Willemsz. den Abt, die hij meent te verkoopen*; see Van Thiel-Stromann 1989–90, doc. no. 58.

26 See A. Tummers and J. Gration in Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 2013, pp. 84–88.

27 See fig. 6 and note 17 above. The designation was originally on the stenter frame and was preserved in later times by sawing out the corresponding piece of wood and inserting it into the new stenter frame.

28 Sale Hoorn, 8 September 1867 (Lugt no. 29948), no. 69.

29 Flameng's etching still bears the title *Hille Bobbe* because of its inscription.

30 Meyer and Von Bode 1883, p. 196, cat. no. 801C.

31 'Die obige Schrift (mit einer Feder auf dem Holz des Rahmens) scheint von der Hand des Meisters selbst zu stammen, denn die Signatur stimmt vollkommen mit derjenigen überein, die ich auf Gemälden gefunden habe, die er mit dem Pinsel signiert hat, jedenfalls ist sie zeitgleich mit dem Gemälde entstanden'. Letter from B. Suermondt to A. van der Willigen, 22 January 1868, RKD archive; see also Von Lützow 1870, p. 78.

32 Berlin, Zentralarchiv der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, SMB-ZA, IV/NL Bode 5392, letter from Barthold Suermondt to Wilhelm Bode, 2/4 November 1885; see also the list of restorer Schmidt, who examined and documented Suermondt's paintings with regard to their condition in Brussels in 1874: SMB-ZA, I/GG 92, no. 79: 'Frans Hals, Hille Babbe, very well preserved', 17 April 1874.

33 With thanks to Harmen Snel of the ACA (email of 21 December 2022), who looked at a photograph of the inscription and its transcription again and also came to this conclusion.

34 Sale Cornelis Ploos van den Amstel / Jan Iver, Amsterdam, 1 October 1778, no. 58 (Lugt no. 2894); sale Nijmegen, 10 June 1812 (Lugt no. 8200 / Getty Provenance Index Sale Catalogues) N-237), no. 88; sale Amsterdam (C.-S. Roos), 12 May 1834 (Lugt no. 13672), no. 92.

Fig. 7. Léopold Flameng (1831–1911) after Frans Hals, *Hille Bobbe*, 1869. Etching, 171 × 142 mm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-1910-3256)

Likewise, in the case of the New York version, Babbe's name appears to have stayed attached to the picture. The earliest evidence of its existence is the etching by the Flemish printmaker Louis Bernard Coclers from the second half of the eighteenth century (fig. 4). Its inscription slightly misspells her name as 'Babel', but still remembers her as a foolish Haarlem character painted by Fr(ans) Hals: 'Babel of Haerlem / To you, your owl is a falcon. O Babel! I am glad of it. / Play with an illusion. You are not alone.'[35] Coclers had not only heard of Babbe's name, but also recognized the pun in the picture: The proverb 'Everyone thinks their owls are falcons' was still a popular one at the time.[36] It adds an interesting layer of meaning to the painting: not only does it portray a specific, foolish individual, but it also reminds us of human folly more in general, of our own tendency to exaggerate the importance and qualities of our children and possessions. The mention of both

35 'Fr(ans) Hals Pinx(i)t L(ouis) B(ernard) Coclers Sculps(i)t. Babel van Haerlem / Uw uil schijne u een valck, o Babel! Ik ben tevreen / Speel met uw falschen pop, Gij zijt het niet alleen.' Translation from Slive 1970–74, vol. 1, p. 151. See below (p. 149) on the reason we believe this etching depicts the New York painting rather than a lost original.

36 'Elk meent zijn uil een valk te zijn'; see Slive 1970–74, vol. 1, p. 151.

Hals's and Babbe's name is all the more noteworthy since it is generally assumed that Hals was largely forgotten in the eighteenth century, only to be rediscovered in the late nineteenth century.[37]

It is unlikely that Hals would have painted his *Malle Babbes* on location in the workhouse. Oil paintings were created in painters' studios in the seventeenth century; mixing paints was quite a complex process (paint tubes were not invented until the second half of the nineteenth century), and as oil paint usually dries rather slowly, pictures had to be protected from dust.[38] Therefore, he must have created the Berlin picture and the lost version of Malle Babbe smoking before Barbara Claes's confinement in 1646. Stylistically, it is quite complex to date the Berlin painting. Hals varied his painting style depending on the type of picture.[39] In his genre paintings, his brushwork and paint application are more experimental than in his life-size, commissioned portraits – they are bolder and looser. The Berlin *Malle Babbe* is commonly dated as the latest of all his genre paintings on account of its extremely loose, *virtuoso* brushwork – a manner called 'rough' (*ruw*) in the seventeenth century, which was known to be very difficult to master, requiring both considerable talent and experience.[40] Another complicating factor is that virtually all Hals's genre pictures appear to date from the 1620s. As noted above, Hals's *Peeckelhaering* was mentioned in a 1631 inventory listing the paintings in possession of the owner of the artists' tavern the Coninck van Vranckrijck, and no genre painting can securely be dated after that year.[41] In short, there is little comparative material and *Malle Babbe* has variously been dated to circa 1650, circa 1635–40, circa 1633–35, circa 1640, and between 1639 and 1646.[42] Interestingly, a copy of the painting created by the artist Gustave Courbet (1819–1877) in 1869 carries

37 Jowell 1989–90, p. 84.

38 Lead-containing paints, however, dried faster than others, and artists used Pb-containing compounds, other driers and heat-polymerized oils to speed up the drying process.

39 Many artists did so in the seventeenth century; see Tummers 2011, ch. 4.

40 Van Mander 1604, *Grondt* XII, fol. 48v. https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/mando01schi01_01/mand-001schi01_01_0014.php. See also Tummers 2011, pp. 219–221.

41 See above, note 25. *Peeckelhaering* was also reproduced in print in the early 1630s, including Hals's signature and with the inscription: 'Frans Hals pinxit'; Jonas Suyderhoef after Frans Hals, *Peeckelhaering*, c. 1630, engraving 244 × 221 cm, Haarlem, Teylers Museum (inv. no. KG 03227); see also Tummers 2011, pp 14–15.

42 Thoré/Bürger 1869, p. 164 (1630–40); Von Lützow 1870, p. 80 (1640s); SMB-ZA, IV/NL Bode 0042, W. von Bode in his travel diary for 1871–72, entry: Aachen, Galerie Suermondt 22 April 1872 (after 1650); N.N., *Exposition des tableaux et dessins d'anciens maîtres, organisée par la Société néerlandaise de bienfaisance à Bruxelles*, Brussels 1873, p. 15, nr. 17 (c. 1650); Unger and Vosmaer 1873, pp. 13–14 (c. 1633); Meyer and Von Bode 1875, p. 29, nr. 21 (c. 1650); Hofstede de Groot 1910, p. 30, no. 108 (c. 1650); Valentiner 1923, pp. xiii, xxiv–xxv, 142, and 316, nn. 141, 142, 144, and 145 (1635–40); Trivas 1941, pp. 35–36, no. 33 (c. 1628); Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, pp. 45–46, no. 75 (1633–35); Baard 1981, p. 118 (1635 or later); Grimm 1989, p. 280, no. 111 (c. 1640); Stukenbrock, pp. 154–171, esp. p. 155 (1645–55); Atkins 2012, p. 140 (1630–33); Erftemeijer 2014, pp. 20 and 145 (c. 1633–35); Grimm, correspondence with the author, 2023 (between 1639 and 1646).

Fig. 8. Gustave Courbet (1821–1880) after Frans Hals, *Malle Babbe*, 1869. Canvas, 85 × 71 cm. Hamburg, Hamburger Kunsthalle (inv. no. 2262)

Hals's characteristic monogram and the date 1645 – neither of which is visible on the original work today (fig. 8). Although the date has often been dismissed as a rather peculiar addition by Courbet,[43] it is plausible that Malle Babbe gained particular notoriety in Haarlem shortly before her confinement in 1646. It raises the question if Courbet could have seen remnants of a date and possibly a monogram on the picture. If Hals would have added these on top of a first varnish layer, it would have been particularly vulnerable to early cleaning.[44]

43 See Jowell 1989–90, p. 71 and S. Slive in the same publication (Cat. Exhib. in Washington / London / Haarlem 1989–90, pp. 236–241, no. 37, esp. pp. 236 and 238). On Courbet's signature see, among others, Krämer 2012, pp. 241–242; Stukenbrock 1993, p. 154 and p. 155, n. 469. Barthold Suermondt, who had acquired the *Malle Babbe* in 1867, also assumed a date of around 1645 for the *Malle Babbe*: see SMB-ZA, IV/NL Bode 5392, B. Suermondt, letter to Von Bode, 12 June 1869 (c. 1640–50) and B. Suermondt, letter to Bode, 12 March 1871 (1645).

44 In cross-sections taken from Hals's paintings, layers of varnish have often been found in between paint layers, e.g., during the recent restoration of the 1640–41 regents group portrait at the Frans Hals Museum. Hals must have commonly used varnish while painting, presumably to saturate the colour before adding to the work. On the use of varnishes in the seventeenth century, sometimes in combination with pigments, and the possibility that such layers were subsequently cleaned off, see Taylor 2007, pp. 207–211. However, Suermondt looked very closely at Hals's paintings and had many restored; therefore, one would expect that he would have mentioned a remnant of a date if there was one.

Alla prima: Hals's virtuoso painting technique

A close look at the painting technique of the *Malle Babbe* pictures in Berlin and New York in regular light, through the microscope and with infrared reflectography (IRR) revealed a number of striking similarities as well as some differences. These were further explored with chemical scanning methods (MA-XRF and HI/RIS) and compared to the Amsterdam forgery. Interestingly, both the Berlin and the New York painting are done entirely wet-in-wet in the so-called *alla prima* technique, or – in Dutch – 'ten eerste schier sonder teyckenen schilderen' (painting directly without preliminary design).[45] The painter and art theorist Karel van Mander (1548–1606), who is mentioned in three different seventeenth-century sources as Hals's teacher, explained that this technique was only suitable for experienced masters or journeymen ('werkgesellen') with a steady hand and an abundance of ideas.[46] Although early scholars already speculated that Hals mastered and employed this technique, the most extensive research report to date on Frans Hals's painting technique could not subscribe to that conclusion.[47] Based on extensive research in the context of the 1989–90 Frans Hals overview exhibition in Haarlem, the team of researchers concluded that Hals painted in separate stages in all the paintings that were studied in depth and therefore could not be called an *alla prima* painter.[48] Admittedly, they did not study *Malle Babbe* in depth and in *Peeckelhaering* they did not distinguish separate stages. In fact, hairs scratched through wet flesh paint in *Peeckelhaering* indicated the absence of underpaint.[49] More importantly, the challenge of *alla prima* painting, as Van Mander defined it, consisted of being able to design directly on the canvas what one had conceived in mind without needing preliminary sketches or designs. It was about creating the painting directly on the canvas and adding corrections where needed in mid-flight instead of beforehand: 'those who have an abundance of ideas, act like the bold, and correct a mistake here or there.'[50] Thus, a few final corrections or touches did not necessarily strip a work

45 '[E]eenighe wel gheoeffent expeerdich, / En vast in handelinghe cloeck beraden, / (Niet licht'lijck verdolend' in cromme paden, / maer om hun Const zijn Meesters name weerdich, / Gaen toe, en uyt der handt teyckenen veerdich / Op hun penneelen, t'ghene nae behooren / In hun Ide' is gheschildert te vooren. / En vallender aen stracx, sonder veel quellen, / Met pinceel en verw', en sinnen vrymoedich'. Van Mander 1604, *Grondt* XII, fol. 46v, ll. 4–5. https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/mand001schi01_01/mand001schi01_01_0014.php; see also Miedema 2013, p. 25.

46 Van Mander 1604, fols. 46v–47r. Early sources on the relation between Hals and Van Mander are cited in Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 2013, p. 16, nn. 13–14, and p. 144, n. 15.

47 Hendriks and Levy-van Halm 1991, p. 37.

48 Ibid., p. 51: 'This study corrects the misnomer that Frans Hals was an "alla-prima" painter.'

49 Ibid., p. 37.

50 Van Mander 1604, fol. 46v: 'die overvloedich / In't inventeren zijn, doen als de stoute, En verbeteren hier en daer een foute.'

Fig. 9. Detail of fig. 2, showing the scratch

of *alla prima* status. The virtuosity was in the direct design and the spontaneous paint application with a steady hand.

In the case of the Berlin *Malle Babbe*, an accidental scratch in the still fresh paint of the collar reveals that the picture was created directly on the preprimed canvas. At the height of the collar and the black garment two parallel lines were scratched into the paint layer while the picture was still entirely wet, exposing the light brownish ground (fig. 9). Observation through the stereomicroscope showed that the middle part of the white collar was applied over the damage during the painting process and that a small correction at the right beside the black contour line, was added considerably later. A scan of the painting realized with hyperspectral imaging, also known as reflectance imaging spectroscopy (HI/RIS), provides even more clarity.[51] The image in false colours, which highlights the areas in the painting that show chemical similarity to the ground layer, based on the careful observation of reference points through the stereomicroscope, is especially significant (fig. 10). The red colour shows exactly where the light, sand-coloured ground is exposed, revealing Hals's fast and efficient painting technique. In several locations he effectively used the sand-coloured ground and let it show through: in the jug, the owl, and the greyish-black clothing. In the area of the jug and the dark dress he toned down the light ground with a very thin greyish-brown wash that fills the depths of the canvas structure. In Malle Babbe's white cap, the painter allowed the colour of the ground to shine through in the darker, shadowy area near the contour of her head, while he covered the ground only lightly with a translucent layer in several

51 The hyperspectral imaging of the painting was carried out with the instruments and methods described in Groves et al. 2018.

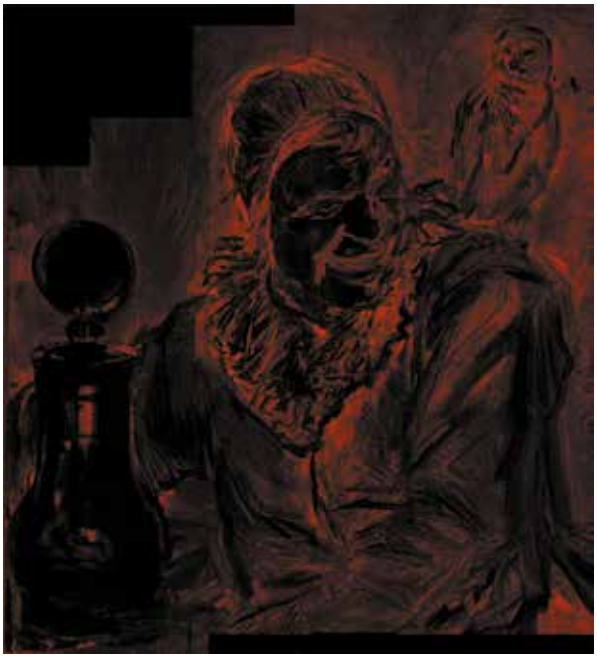

Fig. 10. Hyperspectral (HI or RIS) image of fig. 2 (detail), showing the ground

parts of the face to create a shadow tone, notably to her left of her broad grin, and above her left eye. Hals used a very similar technique for creating facial shadows and the brown hair colour in his *Portrait of an Unknown Woman* of c. 1632–35, also in the Gemäldegalerie, by simply adding a translucent layer directly over the ground.[52] The image also shows what we called the 'halo effect' in a previous study on Hals's characteristic painting techniques.[53] The ground is left exposed in small areas around the contours of the different shapes: the head, the collar, the owl, the clothing, and the jug. By keeping these areas apart Hals prevented smudging and smearing the different wet paints. For the same reason, he laid in the background broadly around Babbe and the owl, and painted more carefully and thinly closer to their contours. Moreover, his firm brushwork with a rather stiff brush left scratches, exposing the light ground in many different areas in her clothing, the owl, and the background, confirming the *alla prima* execution throughout.

The New York *Malle Babbe* was also executed *alla prima*, directly on the ground layer. Both the high-resolution photograph and the IRR are revealing in this respect. The infrared reflectogram (IRR) provides perhaps the clearest evidence (fig. 11).

52 Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, cat. no. 801. Canvas, 76 × 61.4 cm. See Tummers et al. 2019a, pp. 938–940.

53 Ibid., p. 938.

Fig. 11. Infrared reflectogram (IRR) of the New York *Malle Babbe* (fig. 1)

The string attaching the owl's leg to Malle Babbe's hand was added while the rest of the paint was still wet. The IRR shows the black pigments present in the painting and everywhere the string passed, there is a deep black accent where the pigments were dragged along in the direction in which the stroke was applied: from top left to bottom right. The high-resolution photograph is also very clear at the height of the hand: the stroke clearly mixes the black pigments and flesh tones (fig. 12).

Fig. 12. Detail of fig. 1 showing the hand.

Further similarities in style, technique, and use of materials

Close observation of the IRRs of all three *Malle Babbe* pictures reveals further similarities in painting technique between the New York and Berlin version, while exposing a strong difference from Han van Meegeren's painting technique (figs. 11, 13, and 14). At the same time, the comparison also highlights differences in execution between the Berlin *Malle Babbe* and the New York version that relate to noticeable differences in execution that are visible in regular light. As the IRRs show the black pigments, one can easily compare their application. Both the Berlin and New York version show a rather sparse use of blacks. For example, certain dark accents in the face contain black pigments, but certainly not all darker colours.[54] The IRR of Van Meegeren's *Malle Babbe*, on the other hand, looks rather like a black-and-white photograph of the painting: black pigments were used everywhere to create darker colours. Of course, Van Meegeren had never seen an IRR of a seventeenth-century painting and did not realize how sparse and particular seventeenth-century painters were in their use of blacks.

Fig. 13. Infrared reflectogram (IRR) of the Berlin *Malle Babbe* (fig. 2)

54 As will be discussed more extensively in Tummers and Erdmann 2024, Hals consistently used bone black for certain shadows in flesh tones.

Fig. 14. Infrared reflectogram (IRR) of the *Malle Babbe* forgery by Han van Meegeren (fig. 5)

While Van Meegeren's use of blacks is thus uniform and dense, the New York variant is very close to the Berlin version in its technique, yet more hesitant in its execution. Its background is also painted around the main figure and the owl, leaving small areas of ground around the contours exposed. However, it is more opaque and shows two mishaps: directly to the left of Malle Babbe's face the background colour was partially scraped away and at the top right a peculiar dripping pattern is visible. Presumably, the paint contained a surplus of binding medium here. The difference in execution is also very clearly visible in the deepest, darkest accents in Malle Babbe's clothing. While the Berlin version contains just a few efficiently placed accents, the New York variant shows an abundance of accents in the sleeves and body, which do not evoke the three-dimensional shape of the garment as effectively as the Berlin version does. Interestingly, these black accents contain copper in the New York picture, just like the darkest areas in the black dress of the *Portrait of an Unknown Woman*.[55]

A similar difference can be seen in visible light in the depiction of the collar. The pleats of the collar in the Berlin version are indicated with rapid, very loose

55 See note 52.

accents in white and black and a greyish middle tone, which are carefully balanced to convincingly suggest the three-dimensional shape of the collar draped around Malle Babbe's neck. The New York version also contains very loose accents in white and black that look very similar up close but fall short in their overall effect, notably in the suggestion of three-dimensionality. Moreover, the owl – though similar in colours, pose, and use of pigments (including ochre, umber, and bone black) – is depicted with shorter, stiffer brushwork. It is precisely for this reason that Slive's theory that Coclers's print could be based on an original of higher quality is not convincing: the depiction of the collar and owl in the print show exactly the same shortcomings (fig. 4). There is thus no reason to assume that the print is based on any other work.

Upon close inspection, another even more striking similarity in technique and use of materials can be seen in the loose, white accents in the Berlin and New York pictures. Hals is known for his so-called ribbon touches: firmly applied loose accents that have raised edges on both sides.[56] In fact, this feature is so distinctive that the last extensive research report on Hals's technique speculated that it could be unique to Hals.[57] Indeed, this type of brushstroke has subsequently been used a lot in attribution issues. However, interestingly, the white accents in the New York picture show precisely this type of raised edges, indicating a similar viscosity of the paint and pressure during the application, while at the same time betraying a certain lack of mastery. While the white accents in Malle Babbe's cap in the Berlin version convincingly suggest a tied ribbon and a few light accents on the fabric, the accents on the cap in the New York version are only superficially similar: loosely applied, yet not very suggestive of a concrete knot or shape. Likewise, in the Van Meegeren forgery, some accents mimic Hals's characteristic ribbon touch. However, these lack the raised edges; from up close they look rather like icing on a cake, as if they melted somewhat during the ageing process (Van Meegeren famously baked his forgeries in an oven in order to speed up the drying).[58] In their application, Van Meegeren's brushstrokes are closest to the ones in the New York version. For example, the brushwork in the collar is attractively loose and rhythmical, yet not very effective in creating a convincing illusion of depth.

In both the New York painting and Van Meegeren's *Malle Babbe*, the facial expression is the most successful part of the invention: vivid, convincingly three-dimensional, and full of loose accents. It is also closest to the Berlin

56 See also Tummers et al. 2019a.

57 Hendriks and Levy-van Halm 1991, p. 50.

58 Lopez 2008; for the court documents, see Huussen 2009.

version, on which both variants appear to be based (though the accents in the Berlin version are more colourful and placed more boldly). In the New York variant the lighting is more even, as Malle Babbe's face is turned towards the light, while the forgery stays closer to the original, merely lifting Babbe's head backwards. By comparison, the hands in both the New York and Amsterdam variants look less convincing, possibly because a clear example was lacking – the Berlin version contains only a very rudimentary indication of the hand holding the jug.

The attribution of the New York *Malle Babbe*

In short, both the New York and the Amsterdam variant appear to be based on the Berlin example, yet do not equal its extraordinary *virtuoso* execution. Moreover, in technique and use of materials, the New York picture is much closer to the Berlin version than the Amsterdam forgery. In-depth analyses of the materials used confirm that the New York variant is consistent with Hals's workshop practice and materials, while Van Meegeren's forgery is of a much later date. Notably, the lead-isotope analysis showed a clear affinity between types of lead white used in the Berlin and New York version, while the lead white used by Van Meegeren has entirely different characteristics, indicating that the lead ores in the lead white used by Van Meegeren came from a completely different location from the lead ores in Hals's lead white (fig. 15).[59] In the twentieth century, lead was often imported into Europe from the United States and Australia, which could explain the difference.

A close look at the monogram in the New York variant provides a further clue as to the attribution of this work. Although the monogram was dismissed in the past as a later addition, close observation revealed that it is in fact an integral part of the original paint layer (fig. 16).[60] A continuous craquelure pattern intersects both the monogram and the paint layer of the background. The picture was thus clearly intended as a 'Frans Hals'. Therefore, the picture was either authenticated by Frans Hals as a work worthy of carrying his name or it is an early forgery, deliberately created to deceive.

59 The samples were analysed by Gareth Davies and Paolo d'Imporzano of the geochemical Laboratory for Ultra-Low Isotopic Analyses in the Faculty of Sciences, Free University, Amsterdam. See also Tummers et al. 2019b, p. 999. Vermeer forgeries by Van Meegeren had similar outlier results, as discussed by Arie Wallert in an unpublished paper, 'Examination of Stable Isotope Ratios: Consequences for Art History', given at Technart Conference, Catania, 27–30 April 2015.

60 Liedtke 2007, vol. 1, pp. 299–302, no. 69, front matter.

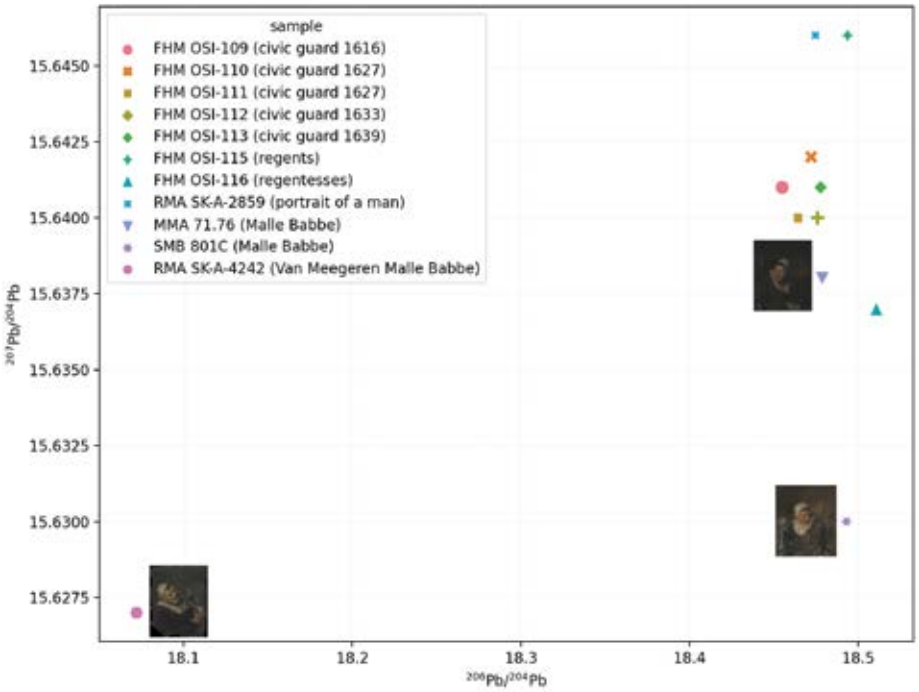

Fig. 15. Graph plotting the lead isotope ratios in paint samples taken from nine reference paintings by Frans Hals (including the Berlin *Malle Babbe*) against the New York *Malle Babbe* and Van Meegeren's *Malle Babbe*

Fig. 16. Micrograph of the monogram on the New York *Malle Babbe* (fig. 1)

Thus far, there is no evidence suggesting that pictures by Frans Hals were forged in his own time, unlike the case of, for example, Hans Bol (1534–1593), who reputedly stopped painting because of all the imitations that were sold under his name.[61] Moreover, the strong similarities in painting technique make the first option by far the most likely. Apart from the challenging *alla prima* technique, the partial exposure of the sand-coloured ground and the characteristic ribbon touches, the use of pigments is also consistent with Frans Hals's workshop practice. Notably, the use of umber (which contains manganese) is comparable – for some shadows in the face and in the background, as can be seen in the MA-XRF scans of the paintings (fig. 17).[62] Similarly, the use of bone black for some facial shadows seems

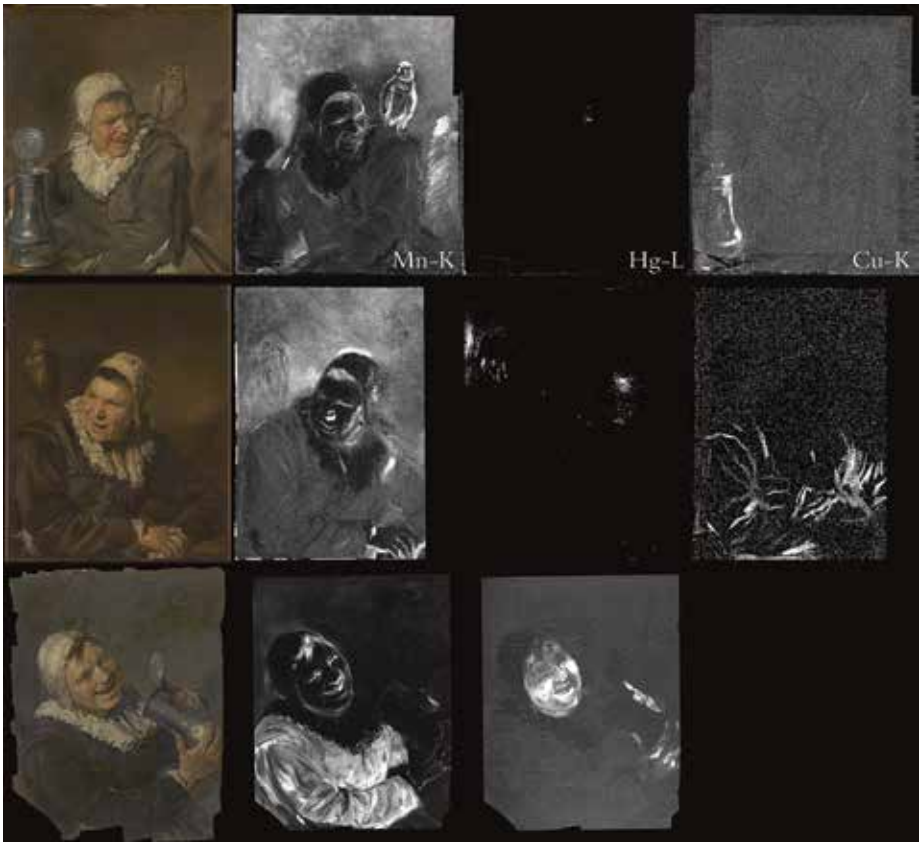

Fig. 17. MA-XRF maps of the three *Malle Babbe* paintings showing the elements manganese (Mn), mercury (Hg), and copper (Cu)

61 Van Mander 1604, fol. 260v; see also Tummers 2011, p. 64.

62 The instrument and method used are described in Alfeld et al. 2013. For the Metropolitan picture, the spot size was 700 microns, the step size was 1000 microns, and the dwell time 90 msec/pixel. The other paintings were mapped with a step size of 700 microns and a dwell time of 70ms/step.

distinctive, as well as the sparse use of vermillion for just a few loose accents in the face (fig. 15). Van Meegeren, on the contrary, used vermillion abundantly for all flesh tones in his forgery. The New York *Malle Babbe* also shows vermillion in the background, which is rare; possibly, the artist simply mixed in some leftover pigment with the background colour so as not to waste materials. In both the Berlin and New York *Malle Babbe*, some of the darkest black accents also contain copper (possibly used as a drier), though these concern different elements: details of the clothing in the New York version and accents in the tin jug in the Berlin painting (fig. 15). In short, the techniques and use of materials in the New York variant are very similar to the Berlin version but not exactly identical, suggesting that it was not created at exactly the same moment in Hals's studio.

Furthermore, the *alla prima* technique used in both pictures and the documents related to Malle Babbe's confinement give an indication as to the dating of the paintings. The only other paintings by Frans Hals that appear to have been done *alla prima* thus far are his portrait of Jasper Schade (dated 1645 on the original cartouche) and a small portrait of a traveller that is dated to around 1650 based on a dendrochronological analysis of the panel on which is it painted; the earliest possible date the latter could have been created is 1649.[63] Since Malle Babbe was confined to the workhouse in 1646, a dating of circa 1640–46 seems most likely for the Berlin *Malle Babbe*. As the New York version is based on the Berlin original, rather than painted after life, and the use of materials differs slightly, a dating of circa 1645–50 seems most likely.

The presence of the master's monogram on what appears to be high quality studio work in the New York version is entirely consistent with seventeenth-century workshop practice. If the master deemed the style and quality good enough for their standards he or she was entitled to sign the work and sell it as their own.[64] It reminds us that attributing seventeenth-century paintings is somewhat counterintuitive. While our tendency is to compare paintings in depth and look for telling signs in the brushwork betraying a different hand, it was not the execution by a different hand that necessarily made a difference. Although the New York *Malle Babbe* is a little lower in quality than the spectacular Berlin version, the Metropolitan Museum of Art was not wrong about its attribution when the museum first opened its doors and displayed it proudly. According to seventeenth-century standards, the picture *is* an original Frans Hals.

63 Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, p. 87, no. 168, and p. 103, no. 199, respectively; see Pokorný 2012, A. Ševčik in Ševčik 2012, pp. 181–183, no. 155; A. Tummers and M. Bijl in Cat. Exhib. 2013, p. 130, no. 34, and p. 142, no. 47, respectively.

64 Tummers 2011, ch. 3.

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9. Looking at Frans Hals in the Digital Age: The Benefits of Detailed Comparisons

Claus Grimm

Abstract: Modern imaging techniques and the increasing availability of high-resolution image files enable a new kind of precise recording of the entire tradition of visual design, especially drawings, prints, and paintings. Detailed comparisons allow us to distinguish the artistic execution of various hands, identifying the characteristics of masters and their assistants. This is especially true where typical aspects of the master's handiwork can be identified, as in the case of Frans Hals.

Keywords: Old Master Painting, 17th century, Haarlem, Portraiture, Workshop Practice

Modern photographic technology and image communication open up new approaches to the history of painting – ours as well as that of all other cultures. The quality of execution can be verified many times over by comparing sharp details – always under the condition of unimpaired preservation and exact photographic recording. We can direct our gaze to the fine structures of the painterly design and identify typical procedures of the draughtsmen and painters in the originally preserved sections. In this way, we can sometimes also identify the prominent handwriting of a master or certain collaborators. The works of Frans Hals allow this to be done to a particular degree, as this painter combines confident draughtsmanship in the capture of motifs with an unerring application of brightness and colour nuances.

An examination of high-resolution photographs of his oeuvre reveals a high degree of workshop involvement, which confronts us with a new problem. Many objects that were previously attributed to a single actor, the painter Frans Hals, become recognizable as co-productions by different hands, without this being particularly recorded or even noticed until now. But it is consistent with the statements of many documents. Master painters could claim pictures as their own and even describe works as 'by their hand' which they had not literally painted themselves. Rubens, for example,

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did this.[1] The most commonly used word for 'original' – *principael* – simply meant that the work was not a copy. The term did not convey a claim as to the execution of a work; a *principael* could well have been painted by several hands.[2] With Hals, as with Rembrandt and most of their contemporaries, we are dealing with masters in charge of workshops who produced pictorial representations for patrons and buyers and not 'art' meant to satisfy the aesthetic expectations of an anonymous public.

Like many other craftsmen, painters and sculptors were able to subcontract parts of their work to colleagues or delegate it to employees in their own workshops. This did not contradict the concept of creating 'art' as a skill at that time, as long as it remained within the framework of a uniform pictorial impression. If one respects this, one will not perceive the following observations as a disparagement of the previous attributions. The modern viewer will instead discover the charm of many previously unnoticed details.

Individual portraits

The characteristics of Hals's painting style become apparent in a comparison of the similarly positioned and lit figures in three male portraits painted at the same time, two dated 1630 and one created around 1627/28 (figs. 1–3).

If we compare the facial parts of the painting in New York (figs. 2 and 9) with those of the Royal Collection picture (figs. 1 and 8), a fundamental difference in both brushwork and the observation of the face as a whole becomes apparent. The first portrait is executed with sharp-cornered brushes in semi-dry paint, while the second seems to have been painted with creamy, soft brushes. The brushes in figs. 2 and 9 cause sharp highlighting of differently lit details, such as the hair of the moustache and goatee, but also the shadow of the nose. In contrast, the depiction of figs. 1 and 12 appears waxy. It has been executed with soft brushes of constant thickness and rather emphasizes the basic three-dimensional appearance of the head.

The varying pressure of the brush movement creates a variety of delineations and connections with which Frans Hals was able to highlight the different surfaces, their shading and the lines of skin tension where they seemed important to him. Since he possessed a special gift for observing hints of movement, this subtle capture of contours and gradations of light and dark was instrumental to his invigorating rendering of his sitters. Also typical of his technique is the loosening up of monochrome parts of clothes into a streaky application of paint (fig. 5), while the corresponding parts remain silky smooth, as in the case of the Royal Collection picture (fig. 4).

1 Tummers 2008, p. 57.

2 Tummers 2011, p. 87; Van der Veen 2005, doc. nos. 16a–b, 21b, and 33.

Fig. 1. Frans Hals and apprentice (Johannes Verspronck?), *Portrait of a Man, presumably Godfried van Heuvel*, 1630. Canvas, 116.7 × 90.2 cm. London, Royal Collection (inv. no. RCIN 405349)

Fig. 2. Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Man*, 1630. Canvas, 115 × 89.5 cm. New York, Private collection

Fig. 3. Frans Hals, *Portrait of an Elderly Man*, c. 1627–28. Canvas, 115.6 × 91.4 cm. New York, © The Frick Collection (acc. no. 1910.1.69). Photograph: Michael Bodycomb

Fig. 4. Detail of Fig. 1

Fig. 5. Detail of Fig. 2

Nevertheless, the portrait in fig. 1, with the slight movement in its facial expression, the raised left eyebrow and the partially open mouth, shows a modelling and a momentary observation typical of Hals. It appears as if the sitter is spontaneously turning towards the viewer in a conversational situation. But the keen, expressive observation of the New York portrait is missing. Both pictures are based on a precise study of the face, and Hals probably created detailed models for both. But only in the New York picture did he work out the final version himself, perhaps even directly in front of the model on the large canvas. Fig. 1, on the other hand, presupposes precise individual studies by the master, also for the section showing the hand, which was then transferred by the assistant (fig. 6).

The qualitative difference between the two versions is clearly visible when looking at the parts showing the ears and the hairline. In the New York painting (figs. 2, 5, and 9), just a few strokes of the flat brush sketch a clear form in increasing and decreasing brightness. This contrasts with the blurred and indistinctly lit modelling of the ear in the Royal Collection portrait (figs. 1 and 8). That painting features a tuft of parallel hair, a schematic mouth line, and a sequence of similar

Fig. 6. Detail of Fig. 1

Fig. 7. Detail of Fig. 3

collar folds. In contrast, the New York painting offers an individual treatment of light and colour. It emphasizes optical impressions and neglects the strict object description. This difference is also visible in the representation of the hands. In fig. 2, this is reduced to a suggestive design; in the case of fig. 1, the hand and finger shape is fully described (fig. 6). But this execution with the flat brush has become rigid: schematic and unnatural. This also applies to the shape of the cuff which appears angular and illogical with its light stripes.

By contrast, we can imagine what a hand that was definitely observed by Hals himself looks like on the basis of the *Portrait of a Man* in the Frick Collection (figs. 3 and 7).

As the brushstrokes on the finger contours show, the painter worked here with soft brushes. From the varying rendering of the fingernails, one can see that he developed a pattern of optical values, of colour nuances and lighting. In contrast, fig. 1 shows only a sequence of equally bright and uniform fingers and fingernails.

Corresponding distinctions can also be made with regard to the chin and collar of the two portraits (figs. 8 and 9).

The quality standards obtained there also allow us to classify another portrait, that of Nicolaes van der Meer from 1631 (fig. 10), as a workshop execution. However, this is a painting that has been partially reworked. The drawing of the whiskers and the flatness of the collar betray an attachment to secondary motifs. This painting is far removed from Hals's sculptural modelling and secure accentuation through accurately distributed areas of light and shadow (figs. 9 and 11).

All in all, comparative observation teaches us to reassess. While figs. 1 and 8 show a confidently captured personality in all his exuberant temperament, figs. 2 and 9 reveal an astute observation of the human psyche as reflected in the facial features in a brief moment of interaction.

Fig. 8. Detail of Fig. 1

Fig. 9. Detail of Fig. 2

Fig. 10. Frans Hals and apprentice (Johannes Verspronck?), *Portrait of Nicolaes van der Meer*, 1631 (detail). Panel, 128 × 100.5 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. OS I-117)

Fig. 11. Detail of Fig. 12, Colonel Aernout Druyvesteyn

Fig. 12. Frans Hals and studio, *Officers of the St. George Civic Guard Company*, datable to 1626/27. Canvas, 179 × 257.5 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. OS I-110)

Group portraits

These and similar critical individual observations can be applied to many other works, especially the large corporate group portraits. There, one repeatedly finds a juxtaposition of different treatments on a limited surface. While the 1616 group portrait of the *Officers of the St George Civic Guard Company* has still been executed by a single hand (see p. 214, fig. 2), the banquet of the officers of the same company painted in 1626/27 (fig. 12) already shows a number of details that differ from this style. Thus, to the left and right of the depiction of the central figure, Captain Michiel de Wael, very different hands of his comrades are visible. While the angularly drawn hand on the left (fig. 13) shows Hals's sketchy technique reduced to a variety of brushstrokes suggesting light and shadow, the execution of the hand on the right (fig. 14) is done in a pulpy mass of colour and is anatomically uncertain. Without a doubt, it must have been painted by an assistant in Hals's workshop.

In a similar manner, however, the strongly varying brightness of the surfaces – an important element of the image illusion – has not been understood by the assistant (or assistants) and has been neglected in their contributions. This becomes clear when comparing the edges of the cuffs and the related shadowed areas on the two

Fig. 13. Detail of Fig. 12, hand of Jacob Olycan

Fig. 14. Detail of Fig. 12, hand of Frederik Coning

arms. In fig. 14, the shadow edge appears as a uniformly dark ring. In contrast, how to render the lighting conditions on such a motif convincingly is demonstrated in fig. 13, showing a hand clearly painted by the master himself.

The participation of assistants went furthest in Hals's later civic guard paintings. In his last work of this genre, *Officers and Sergeants of the St George Civic Guard Company*, datable to 1639, Hals's typical paint application emerges undisturbed only in the two guardsmen at the right edge of the picture, most clearly in the face of Ensign Pieter Schout (figs. 15 and 16). One can search the group portrait figure by figure without finding the painting style of the two ensigns on the right anywhere else. This observation of extensive workshop collaboration also applies to the hands and gloves of the guardsmen, as well as to their collars and sashes. They are all in the manner of Hals, but coarser and more imprecise, probably being based on his detailed individual recordings and preliminary sketches, with only sparse revisions by the master.

The identification of various parts in paintings by Frans Hals as workshop contributions presupposes a certain practice of producing precise preparatory studies by the master and the transfer of these images by copying them into the overall composition. This could be done by apprentices. No such portrait study has survived, nor is this procedure described for Frans Hals; it merely corresponds to what other painters did, such as Anthony van Dyck, in a series of such individual studies for the painting *Justice Flanked by Seven Magistrates of the City of Brussels*, which was destroyed in 1695.[3] The basis for capturing the typical facial proportions and the movement of the facial expressions is the observation of subtle details and their precise reproduction. Only a preparatory individual study on paper or parchment can fix these accordingly and make them easy to transfer.

3 Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, and private collection; see Alsteens and Eaker 2016.

Fig. 15. Frans Hals and studio, *Officers and Sergeants of the St. George Civic Guard Company*, datable to 1639. Canvas, 218 × 421 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. OS I-113)

The reason for Hals's exclusive treatment of the two marginal figures lies in the painting situation in the studio. Only at the edges could the painter sit and stand in front of the picture and have the model before him frontally and with the right lighting. The distance could also not be too far – probably one-and-a-half to two metres – in order to clearly capture the facial features. Where this possibility of observation was not available, the painter had to make a study on an intermediate medium – probably mostly only on paper, parchment, or a small canvas – which

Fig. 16. Detail of Fig. 15, head of ensign Pieter Schout

Fig. 17. Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Man*, c. 1637–38, canvas, 123,5 × 95 cm, Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (inv. no. 1276)

then had to be transferred 1:1 into the larger overall picture, but with its size adapted according the measurements of the other portraits. There is no other way to achieve the kind of proportionate and subtle capture of colour and brightness that characterizes Hals's faces. It is much more difficult to observe these delicate qualities with a strong shift of the gaze and from quickly fading memory.

This direct observation at the edge of the picture can be clearly seen in the left half of the *'Meagre Company'*, which Hals had presumably executed in this way in 1634. The fact that the faces and hands in the left edge of the St George's Civic Guard Group of 1639 do not show the same painterly quality may also be due to Hals's decision not to paint it from direct observation because of inadequate lighting. The place of execution was either the Civic Guard Company's meeting house or Hals's workshop, where the models were set up accordingly. It is conceivable that the left edge of the picture and the room behind it were not lit sufficiently brightly or may not have corresponded to the direction of lighting intended in the picture.

Fig. 18. Detail of Fig. 17

Fig. 19. Detail of Fig. 15, head of Nicolaes Grauwert

The insertion of Hals's self-portrait in the top row entails a likeness created in front of a mirror. The result was obviously inverted and therefore had to be prepared in a separate study in order to correspond to the direction of the uniform lighting from the top left.

Fig. 20. Detail of Fig. 15, head of Captain Quirin Jansz Damast

The difference between a face painted by Hals himself and execution by an assistant can be studied in the details of figs. 17 to 22. The head of fig. 18 belongs to the single *Portrait of a Man* of around 1637–38, now in Rotterdam, while fig. 19 shows the head of Captain Nicolas Grauwert from the civic guard painting of 1639 (fig. 15). In the latter, there are hard outline drawings and dotted contours at the ear and at the base of the hair above the forehead, as well as at the temples. Additionally, the even lines around the eyes and nose make the expression seem frozen. In contrast, the playfully light and thin application of paint in fig. 18 captures an inspired facial movement. Likewise, the base of the collar shows a play with brightness, while in fig. 19 it follows a regular scheme. The convincing representation of a moment of moving facial expression can also be based on the transfer of a preliminary study by the master himself. It was up to Hals to either transfer the prepared details in person or to delegate their execution, since this was the kind of work for which his pupils were trained.

The adjacent figure in the group portrait represents Captain Quirin Jansz Damast (fig. 20), whose face is modelled in a somewhat different, softer brushstroke than in fig. 18. This suggests the hand of a different assistant from Hals's workshop. Many details here are meticulously recorded, but contours are poorly executed, while a greater mass of paint has simply been applied. It is conceivable that this appearance was achieved by the exact but slightly overemphasized copying of Hals's model. If we compare Damast's portrait with that of Ensign Schout (fig. 16), two different

Fig. 21. Detail of Fig. 15, rapier hilt of fiscal Michiel de Wael

temperaments become apparent. Frans Hals as observer focused on the striking optical values he saw in front of him and used the accents of his brush to characterize the physiognomy and momentary, expressive movements. He indicated only a few conspicuous tips from the moustache and just three short shadow strokes from the goatee. In contrast, many whiskers can be traced individually (literally so) in the captain's face (fig. 20). The painter who executed this part registered all the recognizable individual forms. He reinforced the contour of the nose all around and drew the mouth line and other contours where the viewer is aware they must be.

This difference of perception is related to the human mind, which unconsciously wishes to identify its visual environment. We want to recognize the shape, the material, and the three-dimensional extension of the objects. The sophistication of Frans Hals's observation, however, lies in his sense of qualities that particularly touch us in our perception. These are highlighted and all other representation is pushed back, as revealed by the barely indicated mouth lines and the simplified eye contours in fig. 16.

The master's preferences

There is no consistent formula to determine which details Hals reserved for his own contribution and which he delegated. Although much workshop involvement can be seen in the civic guard painting of 1639, the figures and faces in the following

Fig. 22. Frans Hals and studio, *Officers and Sergeants of the St. Hadrian Civic Guard Company*, datable to 1632/33. Canvas, 207 × 337 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. OS 1-112), rapier hilt of captain Johan Schatter

group portrait, that of the regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital from 1640/41, were to be entirely Hals's own work.

One area of Hals's special engagement, however, is in the shiny accessories: the jewellery, the lace on bonnets and cuffs, the ornaments embroidered and woven onto the fabrics, likewise the weapons and the tableware. In this way, he was able to elicit delicate impressions even from complicated and brittle forms. How difficult this was can be seen by comparing two sword handles. The first example is a detail from the group portrait of 1639 and shows the weapon of the fiscal Michiel de Wael. It is probably a workshop version based on Hals's preliminary sketch (fig. 21). The execution by the master, on the other hand, can be seen in the weapon of captain Johan Schatter in the group portrait of 1632/33 (fig. 22).

That Hals probably took pleasure in such 'still lifes' with special light refraction is felt especially in the view of Captain Damast's sword hilt (fig. 23), but no less in that of Ensign Pieter Schout (fig. 24).

One can conclude from this that in the two late civic guard paintings Hals reserved the capture of difficult materials and refined formal structures for himself, while mostly delegating the transfer of the faces and body figures to workshop assistants.

Frans Hals's view of the world of appearances broke with the traditional representation and resulted in new patterns of light effects and colours. With these he reshaped his models and signalled their temperament and vitality. This abstraction anticipated modernist painting.

Fig. 23. Detail of Fig. 15, rapier hilt of captain Quirin Jansz Damast

Fig. 24. Detail of Fig. 15, sword hilt of ensign Pieter Schout

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10. Lost Lines: New Light on the Painting Technique of Frans Hals

Herman van Putten, Liesbeth Abraham and Mireille te Marvelde

Abstract: Given the variation in the consistency of Hals's paint, it has been suggested that he used a variety of binding media. We believe that this was indeed the case. Removal of varnish from the 1640–41 *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital* revealed certain puzzling instances of damage. Further examination showed that Frans Hals most likely used an aqueous binding medium in the setting up of his composition. This method could have been very useful to him not only in terms of speeding up the working process, but also for exploring and defining the composition. In the course of our research, the specific loss of certain brushstrokes relating to this first sketch provided an important clue to understanding the technique in which it was carried out.

Keywords: Paintings Conservation, St. Elisabeth's Hospital, Technical Research of Paintings, Interpretation of Damages, Binding Media, Preparatory Brushstrokes, Derix de Wild, Wybrand Hendricks

Frans Hals's *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital* of 1640–41 is the subject of a double essay elsewhere in this volume, that focuses on the map in the background of the painting (see pp. 65–81). We focus here on observations regarding Hals's painting technique made during the treatment of the painting in the Frans Hals Museum's conservation studio.[1]

The *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital* underwent full conservation between 2013 and 2015. It became clear during the initial phase of this treatment that the painting was covered with several layers of old varnish and a large amount of old, discoloured overpaint and retouching. It was known that the painting had been

1 This article largely reflects the presentation given at the Frans Hals symposium. An expanded version of this article is planned, which will provide more context and scientific data and will also discuss other aspects of Hals's painting technique. The authors are especially grateful to Annelies van Loon, to the London National Gallery, Iperion/EU Archlab, and also to René Gerritsen.

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Fig. 1. Frans Hals, *The Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital*, 1640–41. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. OS I-114). Photograph before treatment (2012): René Gerritsen, Kunst- en Onderzoeksfotografie

restored several times in the past and that all these treatments had left their traces. Paint layers were damaged and residues of old varnishes and overpaint had been left behind during earlier cleaning campaigns, leading over time to a grey veil of degenerated material.[2] As a result, Hals's rich variety of greys and blacks was no longer visible (fig. 1).

The conservation methods and research techniques available to us were obviously more advanced than those of our predecessors, enabling us to work in a highly controlled way and to get much closer to the 'skin' of the original paint layer, returning the painting to an appearance that is more in accordance with Hals's initial intention.

Old retouches were clearly not applied without reason. Technical research preceding the 2013–2015 conservation treatment indicated that considerable damage was present under the conservation layers. In addition to research prior to and accompanying the project, a good deal of information was provided by documentation on previous treatments in the museum archive. The restorer, Derix de Wild, used blue and red watercolour to mark several areas of damage on a

2 Köhler 2006, pp. 486–488, does not mention any previous treatment of the painting. Prior to 1870, however, at least one (undocumented) varnish removal and overpaint occurred; the canvas was probably relined around 1870 (using starch by Walter and Vos and likely impregnated with a wax-resin mixture in 1879 by Frans Vos); between 1870 and 1909 it was regularly washed, regenerated and revarnished (by Vos); 1918: varnish and overpaint removed, revarnished and retouched (by D. de Wild).

Fig. 2. Photograph of the painting after varnish removal in 1918, with damaged areas marked in watercolour by Derix de Wild on the photo. Photograph: Berend Zweers. Frans Hals Museum Archive

photograph of the painting taken after varnish removal in 1918 (fig. 2). Comparing this image to one made during the recent conservation treatment, we find almost the same situation with which De Wild was confronted almost a hundred years earlier (fig. 3).

Fig. 3. The painting after varnish removal, 2015. Photograph: René Gerritsen, Kunst- en Onderzoeksfotografie

Fig. 4. Detail of the figure on the far left showing damage that surfaced after cleaning.

Fig. 5. Detail of one of the damages in fig. 4.

Besides the more common type of damage caused by overcleaning, which shows up as worn or abraded paint layers, we also came across several more puzzling instances. Damage caused by solvents usually manifests itself as abrasion; in this case, however, we also found highly localized, total losses of paint that revealed the light-coloured ground layer and had quite specific shapes (figs. 4 and 5).

As the treatment progressed, it became clear that the shape of these damaged areas looked very much like brushstrokes, but 'negative' ones – missing parts in the black paint layer that leave the lighter ground exposed. These lines of mostly uncovered ground are of roughly similar width and have clear edges. Although formed by an absence of material, the damage in question resembles brushstrokes applied with a certain dash. They are found in all of the figures and are clearly related to the shapes and folds in the black clothing. As Derix de Wild mentioned in the early twentieth century, it is plausible that this damage was caused by past cleaning. It is striking, however, that the black top layer has not dissolved, but simply flaked off – what conservators refer to as 'undercutting': the underlying brushstroke was dissolved and then rubbed away along with the black layer on top, leaving a clearly defined 'negative line'. This observation suggested a difference between the binding media used in an early stage of the painting process and the one employed for the uppermost layers. Besides highly diluted oil paint or other binding media, we considered the possibility of a water-based paint – an idea supported by the characteristic appearance of these 'lost brushstrokes'.

Disappearing brushstrokes: a reconstruction

By what mechanism might the original brushstrokes on the *Regents* have disappeared? Their negative appearance is reminiscent of an etching technique called *tint de sucre* or sugar aquatint, which can be used to introduce a more painterly effect to an etching rather than simply working with a needle in a wax layer. The effect is achieved by applying brushstrokes of pigmented sugar water or gum arabic onto the clean metal etching plate. The whole surface of the plate is then covered with a resin-based varnish or etching ground which is allowed to dry, and the plate rinsed with water. The latter dissolves the sugar-bound brushstrokes beneath the varnish or etching ground, leaving the previously covered brushstroke clean and open down to the surface of the metal. Since it is not soluble in water, the varnish or etching ground remains intact elsewhere on the surface. A little further preparation is needed, but the uncovered lines can basically now be etched by acid and printed (fig. 6).

If we focus on the first part of this technique, it is striking how much the lost brushstrokes in the *Regents* resemble the washed-out *tint de sucre* lines on the

Fig. 6a–d. Stages of the *tint de sucre* etching technique

Fig. 7. Detail of fig. 4. Area below the regent's right hand, showing the damage caused by undercutting of the black paint layer.

etching plate. The top layer of black oil paint on the *Regents* likewise appears to have been wiped away after the underlying brushstrokes were dissolved, leaving clearly confined paint losses in the shape of brushstrokes.

What might have happened to the *Regents* to result in this particular type of damage? Sources tell us that paintings were often cleaned in the past with compresses of water and soap, sometimes applied for prolonged periods of up to 24 hours. There are grounds for thinking that something like this occurred in the case of the *Regents* too. In 1918, Derix de Wild expressed his opinion that, given the poor condition of the painting, it must have been cleaned with soaps in the past. The fact that the dark brushstrokes had not dissolved in places where they were covered by thicker, light-coloured paint would appear to support this theory, as moisture was seemingly unable to penetrate these lead-containing layers and therefore could not dissolve the dark, water-soluble brushstroke (fig. 7).

This assumption was confirmed by a cross-section: beneath the overlapping, more resistant grey brushstroke, we found our brushstroke still intact. The cross-section shows a compact, highly pigmented layer with extremely small black particles (fig. 8). The appearance of this black paint differs completely from the paint layers above it, not only in pigment size, but also in the absence of any fluorescence of a binding medium as is visible in the top layers. Considering its sharp borders, there must have been a certain cohesion between the pigment particles in the

Fig. 8a. Detail of fig. 4. The arrow indicates the location of the sample that is seen in cross-section in fig. 8b: no. 114.34a, 400x, ultraviolet light. The dark, water-soluble brushstroke is indicated with a brace.

black brushstroke – a cohesion that could be broken, however, when dissolved in a solvent to which the upper, oil layers were not susceptible. We believe that the solvent in question must have been water, likely combined with a soap.

Armed with this knowledge, we decided to imitate the presumptive working method by creating a dummy, in which we covered black brushstrokes in aqueous paint with thin layers of black oil paint and intersecting strokes of thick grey oil paint, comparable to those of the original painting. Once these were dry, we

Fig. 9. Dummy used to reconstruct the damage detected in the *Regents*

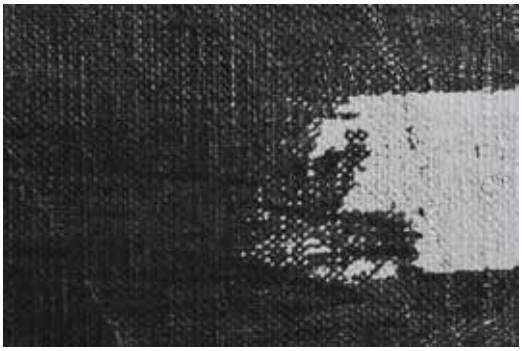

Fig. 10a–b. Detail of fig. 4. and detail of fig. 9

Fig. 11a. Detail of fig. 4. The translucent brown layer is visible in the damage (middle of the image)

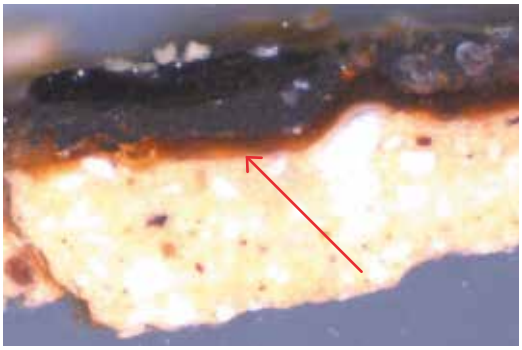

Fig. 11b. Cross-section no. 114.36, 100x, dark field. The layer is indicated with an arrow

applied a wet compress to discover if the same kind of damage would occur. This was indeed the case, with the damage closely resembling the lost brushstrokes detected in the *Regents* (fig. 9). The thick grey oil paint protected the underlying black brushstroke from dissolving. Large parts of the black, water-based brushstrokes did dissolve, however, causing the thin layers of black oil paint on top to flake off. Even the shape of the residual islets of black oil paint of the topmost layer looked quite similar (fig. 10a–b).

Alongside the black underlying lines we also observed a thin, translucent brown layer (fig. 11a). It appears that black brushstrokes were placed on top of this brown, more broadly applied layer, which can be found in lacunae all over the regents' clothes. Paint cross-sections confirm this observation (fig. 11b).

Hals's painting technique

What do these observations tell us about Hals's painting technique? Taken together, they suggest that when preparing his group portrait of the regents, Hals began the

Fig. 12. Wybrand Hendriks (1744–1831) after Frans Hals, *The Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital*, 1787. Watercolour, 34.8 × 54.8 cm. Amsterdam Museum (inv. no. TA 10593)

composition in a thin, translucent brown paint, which was broadly applied and already had a tonal appearance – variations in dark and light. At the same time, he used black brushstrokes to indicate the direction of elements such as arms, legs and folds in the clothing. We believe that this first sketch was done in aqueous paint, enabling Hals to explore and define his composition, which he subsequently completed in layers of oil paint.

A watercolour by Wybrand Hendriks (1744–1831) played an important role during our treatment of the painting, not only as a point of reference but also as support for our theory (fig. 12).

In this accurate copy of the painting, a striking dark line can be seen in the coat of the regent seated on the far left (fig. 13). It corresponds almost exactly with one of the lost brushstrokes found in the damaged original painting. The interesting conclusions to be drawn from this are not only that the damage to the painting must have occurred after Hendriks made his copy in 1787, but also that the black line in the sketch must have functioned as a point of reference during the painting process. It even had a visual function in the final result as a deep black accent in the folds of the regent's coat.

Speculating on the reasons for use of an aqueous binding medium by Frans Hals, the advantages of its short drying time seem obvious. It would have allowed him to get on almost immediately with the next step in oil paint and thus underpinned the rapid working method and sketchy style that are his trademark. It is true

Fig. 13. Detail of fig. 12 and detail of fig. 3

that a 'thin' oil sketch would also have done the job, but this would have dried much more slowly. What's more, when oil of turpentine is added in subsequent layers, this can be easily smeared, reducing the amount of guidance for the further development of the composition. The water-based sketch, by contrast, would not have been affected by the oil and would have provided such support throughout the whole painting process. A second advantage might have been the possibility to correct and alter individual parts easily when refining the composition in this early sketching phase. The use of a non-absorbent ground layer on the canvas meant that the aqueous paint could simply be wiped off, almost in the manner of a modern whiteboard.

Conclusion

Research into Hals's painting technique, the build-up of the paint layers and the different binding media continues. The obvious question that arises is whether Hals also used the aqueous binding medium in other paintings. As previously mentioned, our discovery concerning the *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital* arose

from the observation of unusual areas of damage, likely caused by thorough cleaning with moisture and soaps in the past.

The two *Regents* group portraits that Hals painted for the Old Men's Almshouse, towards the end of his career, do not show this characteristic kind of damage, as they have a different treatment history (see pp. 110–129). However, while the distinctive lost lines are not visible, there are reasons to believe that the black sketching lines, comparable to those in the *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital*, are present in these later works as well. Cross-sections of paint indicate that the same aqueous technique was used. Research based on these observations continues, with the aim of finding further answers to questions on this important and intriguing subject.

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11. Unfinished Business? Comparing Hals's Late *Regents* and *Regentesses*

Liesbeth Abraham

Abstract: During the recent conservation of Frans Hals's last paintings, *The Regents* and *The Regentesses of the Old Men's Almshouse*, the many similarities and differences between the two paintings were closely examined, providing new insights and a better understanding of Hals's working method. Differences in the degree of finish between the two paintings have led scholars in the past to comment on Hals's advanced age and, more specifically, his failing eyesight and lack of energy. More recently, doubts have been raised concerning the attribution of the *Regentesses* and the suggestion that other hands were involved. This presentation discusses such differences and shows that they are not necessarily attributable to different hands; they can also be explained by the fact that we are looking at different phases in the painting process.

Keywords: Old Men's Almshouse, Hals's Old Age, Degree of Finish, Contrasting Brushstrokes, Painting Process, Achieving Spontaneity

Between 2013 and 2017, the *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital* (1640–41), and the *Regents of the Old Men's Almshouse* and *Regentesses of the Old Men's Almshouse* (both traditionally dated 1664) were closely examined and restored by a team of paintings conservators at the Frans Hals Museum.[1] This article concentrates on the *Regents* and *Regentesses of the Old Men's Almshouse*, focusing on a number of similarities, but more particularly on differences between the two paintings (figs. 1 and 2).

1 The recent research and treatment of the regents' portraits was carried out by L. Abraham, M. te Marvelde, and H. van Putten, in close collaboration with researchers from a wide variety of disciplines. Annelies van Loon was the lead scientist and technical photography was carried out by René Gerritsen. Numerous imaging techniques and analysis methods were used, varying from raking light to UV, IR, X rays, microscopy, Point and Macro XRF, and SEMEDX. See Mireille te Marvelde et. al. (p. 111, n. 1-2) for further acknowledgements and funding.

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Fig. 1. Frans Hals, *The Regents of the Old Men's Almshouse*, traditionally dated 1664. Canvas, 172.3 × 256 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. I-115). Photo René Gerritsen, Kunst- en Onderzoeksfotografie

By describing what we see and what is known about Hals's working method and painting technique, we attempt to analyse, describe, and explain some of the differences. Imaging techniques, spectroscopy, and other scientific research and methods of analysis were crucially important during the project. The research discussed in this article – which by no means claims to offer a comprehensive description of Hals's technique – is based, however, on observations made with the naked eye.[2]

The full conservation treatment of the paintings provided an excellent opportunity for research. The conservators involved spent a great deal of time in front of the two portraits, constantly studying the paint layer. They focused during cleaning on variations in surface structure so as to detect loose paint and on differences in gloss and translucency in order to distinguish later additions from the original paint. Other observations were made *en passant* as the treatment progressed. These often prompted questions regarding Hals's painting technique and artistic intentions, and gained in significance as the connections between them became apparent. Things mostly fell into place while retouching damaged areas in the paintings, as it is in this phase of the treatment that the focus on the artist's intention and technique is most intense.

2 Supported with magnifying glasses and a stereomicroscope.

Fig. 2. Frans Hals, *The Regentesses of the Old Men's Almshouse*, traditionally dated 1664. Canvas, 170.5 × 249.5 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. I-116). Photo René Gerritsen, Kunst- en Onderzoeksfotografie

Hals's old age

As early as 1660, the poet Herman Frederik Waterloos criticized Hals's portrait of the Amsterdam minister Herman Langelius, painted shortly before: 'Why, Old Hals, do you try and paint Langelius? Your eyes are too dim for his learned lustre, and your stiffened hand too crude and artless.'[3] While disapproving of a person's portrait in order to praise the qualities of the sitter is a well-known literary topos, one can still wonder what it was that Waterloos objected to: the proportions, the composition, the resemblance to the man portrayed, or Hals's painterly style in general?

Hals's supposedly fading eyesight and stiffening fingers would not have improved by 1664, four years later, when he is thought to have painted the *Regents* and *Regentesses*.[4] Several scholars agree with Waterloos that Hals was hindered by old

3 Amiens, Musée de Picardie (inv. no. M.P.Lav. 1894–1995; Slive 1970–1974, vol. 3, p. 110, no. 215). Poem published in Van Domselaer 1660, vol. 1, p. 408: 'Wat pooght ghy ouden Hals, Langelius te maalen? Uw ooghen zyn te zwak voor zyn gheleerde stralle[n]; En Uwe stramme handt te ruuw, en kunsteloos'; see Van Thiel Stroman 1989–90, p. 408. doc. no. 158.

4 It is generally assumed that Hals painted the two portraits in 1664, as he was able to act as a guarantor for his son-in-law on 22 January 1665 for a sum of nearly Dfl. 460, presuming he had received payment from the regents and regentesses by then; see ibid., p. 412, doc. no. 179..

age, especially when painting the group portraits of the regents. The *Regentesses* is widely considered to have been painted with greater care than the *Regents*. In 1902, for example, Gerald S. Davies commented on the latter: 'The hand was indeed failing now and tremulous, though the eye saw and the brain felt [...] the five old men are on the whole painted with more signs of weakness than the five women Regents.'[5]

Others, by contrast, did not see a failing Hals: they believed, on the contrary, that old age afforded him greater psychological insight and enabled him to arrive at the essence of what he wanted to express. In 1913, Jeronimo De Vries remarked:

> A broken-down man he cannot have been, this painter of ours, who, in his 84th year, with so firm a hand, with so perfect a self-confidence, with so manly a daring, conjured into existence such a pair of pictures [...]. Seemingly careless – look at the gloves here, the sleeves there, the hands yonder – but it is from no old age unable to properly distinguish what it is about, that can begin well, but surprised by impotence, is unable to complete – no, here you have the unweakened mastership that, after long practice, is scornful of details [...]. One would not think it credible, says an old art-connoisseur, if one had not seen it with one's own eyes, that it was possible by means of so few broad strokes to express so decisively and perfectly all that has to be there.[6]

De Vries and others characterized Hals's late paintings in stylistic and psychological terms. This article intends to gain a closer understanding of the artist's working method and artistic aims by examining and comparing the two paintings from a technical point of view. This approach leads to another, more precise explanation of the differences between these two late works.

Similarities

The similarities between the paintings are striking: the two group portraits are painted on the same type of canvas and have the same, surprisingly thin, light-brown preparation layers. The build-up of paint layers and the pigments used are the same, and the discolouration of the tablecloths and curtains, for instance, is comparable. Both paintings show the same intriguing variations in the handling and the consistency of paint, such as dripping and sagging, but also in the stiff, scumbled

5 Davies 1902, pp. 79–80. See also Moes 1909, p. 70: Dülberg 1930, p. 214; Schmidt Degener 1924, p. 27; and Luns 1946, p. 55.

6 De Vries 1913, pp. 8, 18, 27, and 28. See also Lübke 1876, p. 26; Von Bode 1883, pp. 68–69; Von Bode 1917, p. 46; Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 1937, p. 25; Martin 1942, p. 204; Descargues 1968, p. 123; and Baard 1981, p. 154.

Figs. 3a–b. *The Regents*, detail (left) and *The Regentesses*, detail (right)

paint and paint with a buttery consistency. These variations are found in Hals's paintings throughout his career, although they are by no means unique to him.[7]

One striking aspect found in many of Hals's paintings, including the *Regents* and *Regentesses*, seems crucial if we are to understand the similarities and hence to recognize the differences between them. We refer to the characteristic black, opaque brushstrokes, applied during the final phase of the painting process, which are found in both paintings (figs. 3a–b). These accents are important: Hals used them to 'knock things back or pull them forward', as contemporary artist Jinn Bronwen Lee put it during a visit to the conservation studio.[8]

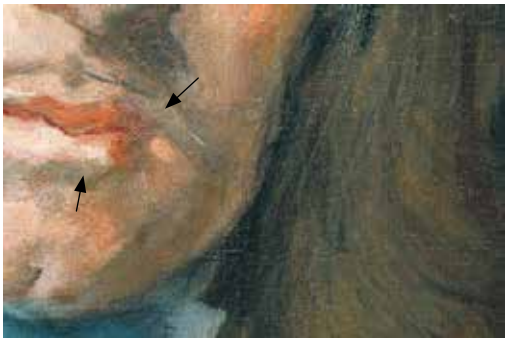
The brushstrokes in question somehow define the shape, but not by carefully following it: on the contrary, they are mostly placed in a direction that almost goes against the suggested form and often seem to stand on their own. Hals added the black, opaque strokes in the final phase of the painting process, often not doing so wet in wet, but applying them instead on dry paint layers. These final brushstrokes – bold and with a calligraphic quality – are not always black: they can also be white or another colour. They enabled Hals to achieve powerful contrasts. Broad, black, opaque brushstrokes of this kind were used in many cases to reinforce the darkest shadows along the faces (figs. 4a–b). Hals, unlike Rembrandt, was clearly not afraid of using black shadows.[9]

7 The same debris is found in the paint layers, as is the same use of fluorescent intermediate layers (varnishes between paint layers); results of this research will be published elsewhere. Similar possible indications of the use of a water-based medium for the first sketch lines, used to set out the composition, were also found, although these were more clearly present and identified with greater certainty in the earlier *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital*. Further results of this research will also be published elsewhere.

8 7 July 2016.

9 This slightly surprised Ernst van de Wetering, who commented during a visit to the conservation studio (5 March 2015) that most painters, including Rembrandt, would have avoided shadows like this in pure black.


Figs. 4a–b. *The Regents*, detail (left) and *The Regentesses*, detail (right)




Figs. 5a–b. *The Regents*, detail (left) and *The Regentesses*, detail (right)

Neither painting was executed in a single layer or *alla prima*, as is often assumed, but in several sessions and in several layers, all very thinly applied. If he found it useful, Hals left the first thin paint layers exposed, employing them as a shadow or a midtone (fig. 5a). The first layers in the faces serve as a grey shadow, and as a midtone in the nose and below the cheek. The thinly painted shadows were done first and in a subsequent phase were partially covered by the thicker highlights and dashes of colour (fig. 5b). To some extent, the light-brown ground underneath was also left uncovered to the same end. Several layers of paint – or more accurately, perhaps, different phases in the painting process – are visible at the same time and all contribute to the desired end result.

This technique seems to have been very important to Hals, allowing him to achieve and maintain the effect of swift and spontaneous painting. It is by no means unique to him, but he is definitely more daring in this regard than his contemporaries, leaving more of the underlying layers exposed and using stronger contrasts and bolder brushstrokes that are not blended into the adjacent colours or tones. This working method served him well throughout his career and was also used in the earlier group portraits of the *Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital* and the Haarlem Civic Guard.

Differences

The differences between the *Regents* and the *Regentesses* have been commented on by numerous authors.[10] They also prompted Claus Grimm to reconsider the attribution of the *Regentesses* and to suggest that different artists collaborated on the painting.[11] Some of these differences are analysed here from a technical point of view. There is a fine line between painting in a bold, sketchy manner and not getting round to the final phase. In seeking to draw this line, it has to be understood that the impression of immense spontaneity Hals creates could, in Ernst Gombrich's words, 'never have been achieved without a very calculated effort. What looks at first like a happy-go-lucky approach is really the result of a carefully thought-out effect.'[12] Or as David Hockney stated: 'you must plan to be spontaneous.'[13]

There are many examples in earlier paintings by Hals of areas that seem unfinished but not as many or to the same degree as we find in the *Regents*. Compared to the *Regentesses*, some parts appear not so much painted spontaneously as left unfinished. They seem to lack what Arnold Houbraken described as 'the master's touch' ('het kennelyke van den meester'), supposedly using the words of Frans Hals himself in his biography of the artist: 'They say that it was his custom to lay his portraits on thick and wet, only applying the brushstrokes later with the words: "Now to give it the Master's touch".'[14]

The hands in the left half of the *Regents* lack a certain definition and contrast, consisting as they do only of the first, rather undefined paint layers (fig. 6a). Similarly undefined layers are also partly visible in the *Regentesses*, but in that case Hals finished them with the contrasting accents, the bold, black, and coloured brushstrokes described above (fig. 6b).[15] The *Regents*' hands (fig. 7a), which besides that lack of definition and contrast do not have much colour either, represent the

10 Davies 1902, pp. 79–80; Fontainas 1908, p. 108; Schmidt Degener 1924, p. 27; Riegl 1999, p. 351; Gratama 1943, p. 44; Baard 1981, p. 150.

11 Grimm 1990, pp. 158 and 245–246; Grimm 2023.

12 As quoted in Sorban 1978, pp. 23–24.

13 From *David Hockney: A Bigger Picture*, documentary by Bruno Wollheim, 2017.

14 Houbraken 1718–21, vol. 1, p. 92; 'Men zegt, dat hy voor een gewoonte had, zyn Pourtretten vet, en zachtsmeltende aan te leggen, en naderhand de penceeltoetsen daar in te brengen, zeggende: Nu moet 'er het kennelyke van den meester noch in.' English translation by M. Hoyle in Cat. Exhib. Washington / London / Haarlem 1989–90, pp. 17–18.

15 Quarles van Ufford 1828, p. 71, was most likely referring to the visibility of the undefined underlayers when he wrote: 'Deze stukken zijn niet voltooid, en doen de wijze van aanleggen van dien meester duidelijk zien.' Van Eijnden and Van der Willigen 1816–40, vol. 4, p. 143, make the same comment, writing: 'terwijl zij niet voltooid zijn, en alzoo op eenige plaatsen zijne wijze van aanleggen doen zien.' The undefined, dull first layer(s) of paint are the so-called *aanleg*. Hals could well have used the contrasting, bold brushstrokes to paint what Houbraken called 'the master's touch'. See previous footnote.


Figs. 6a–b. *The Regents*, detail (left) and *The Regentesses*, detail (right)


Figs. 7a–b. *The Regents*, detail (left) and *The Regentesses*, detail (right)

preceding phase – the preparation required in order to arrive at what we see in the *Regentesses* on the right (fig. 7b). While rather bland, these first paint layers are essential, as they allowed Hals to finish in a decidedly sketchy, calligraphic, and bold way by simply adding a few colour accents and black brushstrokes between fingers or along contours.

The overall impression is one of great spontaneity, but was actually achieved through careful preparation or, as Hockney puts it, planning. In short, the *Regents*' unfinished hands are not a sign of inferior quality or evidence of a less able painter at work, they are simply that: unfinished – we see Hals's planning.[16] Fig. 8a shows the sketch of a regent's cuff. Angular white brushstrokes indicate the contours. The shape is undefined, while the hand and cuff stand apart. In the more elaborated cuff of one of the regentesses, these first sketch lines are still visible (fig. 8b). Also, in the regent's hand in fig. 9a the final black, opaque brushstrokes between the fingers and the dashes of colour, as seen in the regentess's hand (fig. 9b), are

16 Davies 1902, pp. 79–80, wrote that: 'At no point of distance which the room permits will these men's hands come into complete coherence.' Schmidt Degener 1924, p. 27, also described the shapeless hands of some of the regents as 'vormlooze handen zonder gewrichten'.


Figs. 8a–b. *The Regents*, detail (left) and *The Regentesses*, detail (right)


Figs. 9a–b. *The Regents*, detail (left) and *The Regentesses*, detail (right)

missing. These brushstrokes and other accents are mostly not painted wet in wet, but applied on dry paint, implying that they really represent a separate phase in the painting process.

Conclusion

The hands and cuffs in the left half of the *Regents* as well as the dark clothing and a few collars did not achieve the same degree of finish as the *Regentesses*. Wybrand Hendriks also noticed this when making a watercolour after the *Regents*, writing on the reverse: 'Drawn after a painting by F. Hals in his final years. With the heads finished and the rest of the piece in his typical Own Manner. Firmly dead-coloured. Followed meticulously in every regard by W. Hendriks.'[17]

17 Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 2023–24, p. 212, cat. no. 109: 'Getekend na een schilderij van F: Hals in zijn laatste tijd. / zijnde de Hoofde afgewerkt. en 't overige van 't stuk in de hem zoo bizonder. Eige Manier. Krachtig gedoodverft. Zijnde in alles naauwkeurig / Gevolgd door W: Hendriks.'

The *Regents* seems unfinished only in parts rather than as a whole. All the faces and also the hands in the right half of the painting are finished to more or less the same level as the *Regentesses*. Overall, the *Regents* was considered sufficiently finished to be accepted.[18] There was no request to another artist to finish it to a higher degree, as occurred with the *Meagre Company*. The portrait was hung in the regents' room of the Old Men's Almshouse and remained on the wall as later generations of regents gathered there.[19]

We do not know why Hals never got round to the final phase of painting, but if it was due to old age, this would mean that the *Regentesses* was painted first, as Schmidt Degener suggested in 1924.[20] There could, however, also have been other reasons for Hals leaving the portrait of the *Regents* as it is.

This article has set out to discuss and illustrate a number of similarities between the *Regents* and *Regentesses* portraits, but primarily the difference in their respective degree of finish. In doing so, it avoids quality judgements in terms of virtuosity and whether the works are good or weak, Hals or not Hals. The aim has not been to exclude the possibility that artists other than Hals worked on the paintings, as Claus Grimm has suggested, so much as to offer an alternative explanation. What is both more important and interesting is the better insight of Hals's technique and working methods that is gained by comparing the two paintings. While it cannot be ruled out that different artists were involved, certain differences can at least be explained in another way too. Each phase in the painting process and each layer builds towards the sense of spontaneity, boldness and accuracy that is so crucial to Hals. One has to wonder, therefore, at which stage another artist could actually have taken over.

About the author

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18 Contemplating whether these painting are finished or not, Von Bode 1883, pp. 68–69, wrote: 'Der Katalog des Museums nennt diese Arbeiten "unvollendet"; allein der Vergleich mit anderen Bildnissen aus dieser Epoche beweist uns, dass Hals diese Bildnisse, welche an Breite des Machwerks an Eintönigkeit der Färbung allerdings Alles übertreffen, was er uns, ja was uns überhaupt irgend ein Künstler hinterlassen hat, für vollendet hielt und halten konnte. Den der bekannte Ausspruch Rembrandt's, dass ein Bild vollendet sei, sobald die Absicht des Meisters darin erreicht sei, gilt im vollsten Maasse für diese beiden Werke.'

19 The painting is mentioned by Pieter Langendijk as hanging in the Regents' room (c. 1745–50); see Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief, Ms. 153, fol. 14; Biesboer 2001, pp. 352–353; and Biesboer in Köhler 2006, p. 489.

20 Schmidt Degener 1924, pp. 25 and 27: 'Een vergelijking van deze beide Regentenstukken leert dat het College van Regentessen waarschijnlijk het eerst geschilderd werd.' This was also suggested by Rudi Ekkart during a visit to the conservation studio (7 September 2015).

Reputation

12. From a Parisian Dining Room to a German Private Museum: Frans Hals in the Collections of Count André Mniszech and Marcus Kappel

Emilie den Tonkelaar

Abstract: Following the death of Count André Mniszech (1823–1905), a Pole living in Paris who owned seven portraits by Frans Hals, his paintings found their way into private collections, including that of Marcus Kappel (1839–1920) in Berlin. Kappel's manner of collecting and exhibiting differed considerably from that of his Parisian predecessor. Although he owned another two pieces by Frans Hals, the *Portrait of Catharina Brugman* was acclaimed as one of the finest paintings in his collection.

Keywords: Old Master Painting, Provenance History, History of Collecting, Catharina Brugman, Tieleman Roosterman, Paul van Cuyck, André Mniszech, Marcus Kappel

In February 1906 the board of London's National Gallery politely declined the offer of six portraits by Frans Hals for 2,800,000 francs.[1] It was too many all at once, it was felt. If the paintings were offered individually the museum might reconsider, but it was not to be. All the same, the owner of the paintings, the Parisian widow Countess Isabella Mniszech, *née* de Lagatinerie (1840–1910), did eventually sell the paintings separately over the years to collector John Pierpont Morgan and dealer Franz Kleinberger, through whom they found their way into the famous collections of August de Ridder, Adolphe Schloss, and Marcus Kappel.

1 London, The National Gallery archive, correspondence, NG6-25-638, 28 February 1906. The portraits offered to the museum were: Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, pp. 23–24, nos. 38–39: Van Middelhoven (formerly Schloss collection) and his wife (Lisbon, Gulbenkian Museum) see p. 20, figs. 3 and 4; ibid., p. 54, no. 94: Catharina Brugman (private collection); ibid., p. 55, no. 96, Portrait of a Woman (Baltimore Museum of Art) see p. 62, fig. 16; ibid., p. 76–77, nos. 149–150, 'Bodolphe and his wife' (New Haven, Yale University Art Museum).

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The current location of the painting that Schloss purchased is unknown after it was stolen by the Nazis. The other works have been acquired by museums. Only one remains in private hands: the portrait of Catharina Brugman (1611–1677), of which until recently not even a colour photograph was known (fig. 1).

The present article reviews the provenance of Catharina Brugman's portrait, with the focus on two collections in which she resided for several decades before 1900 and half a century afterwards: those of Count André Mniszech in Paris and Marcus Kappel in Berlin.

In the family for over a century

Catharina Brugman's portrait was painted in 1634, together with a pendant: the portrait of her husband Tieleman Roosterman (fig. 2). Both portraits have been identified on the strength of subsequently added heraldic emblems.[2] Seymour Slive noted that the inscription *AETA SVAE 22 / AN° 1634* does not correspond with the year of birth of a *Trijntje Brugman*, 1609. Isabella van Eeghen reacted on his publication in 1974, mentioning the correct baptism date in 1611. A genealogy of the Roosterman family in the Amsterdam City Archives adds the date of birth, November 1 1611.[3] The early provenance of these two portraits is known, thanks to Pieter Biesboer: they were passed down by inheritance within the family in Haarlem until at least 1741.[4]

A century later, in 1843, 1866, and 1869, anonymous portraits of almost identical proportions as Catharina and Tieleman, 'meesterlijk geschilderd' by Frans Hals, were sold at auction in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Paris.[5] All these lots may also have

2 The coat-of-arms on the Tieleman portrait was overpainted by restorers in Cleveland; Catharina still has her emblem; see Iacono 2007, pp. 49–50. It is unclear when these additions were made. Given the use of Prussian blue, it was certainly after 1720. See also Baldass 1951.

3 Den Tonkelaar in Cat. Exhib. Berlin 2024, p. 113, nn. 4–6, referring to I.H. Van Eeghen, "Pieter Codde en Frans Hals", *Maandblad Amstelodamum*, 61 (1974), pp. 137-140 and to Stadsarchief Amsterdam 5015 inv. 226, *Genealogie van Rosterman*, p.5. With many thanks to Jan de Klerk for bringing these sources to my attention.

4 See amongst others P. Biesboer's discovery of the inventory of Johanna Catharina van Vladeracken, 3 June 1741, Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief (NHA), no. N-6495, published on the Getty Provenance Index.

5 Sale 1843: Sale De Leeuw, Barbiers et al., Amsterdam (De Vries, de Roos, et al.), 11 July 1843, no. 41, '*masterfully painted*', L17088, RKD ex. 20140656 9: seller 'Praetorius', buyer 'Schmidt'. This might be P.E.H. Praetorius (1791–1876): see Slive 1998, pp. 278 and 308. Hofstede de Groot (1910, vol. 3, nos. 345j and 409l) did not link these portraits to the Roostermans, but included them in his survey of anonymous portraits, without reference to seller or buyer. Later authors did not adopt these numbers in their concordances. Sale 1866: Sale Paul van Cuyck, Paris (Drouot), 7/10 February 1866, nos. 45 (frc. 1.530) and 46 (frc. 2.555), L28847, Hofstede de Groot 1910, nos. 349bis and 413a.

Fig. 2. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Tieleman Roosterman*, 1634. Canvas, 117 × 87 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Leonard C. Hanna, Jr. Fund (acc. no. 1999.173)

described other portraits by Frans Hals, except for those in the February 1866 sale in Paris, at which two paintings appeared, with similarly anonymous, yet precise descriptions. The female portrait shows a woman with one hand on a chair and a glove in the other; the male portrait a man with one hand on his hip, the other in a white glove. The only two Frans Hals portraits that meet these descriptions and were not recorded elsewhere at that time are those of Catharina Brugman and Tieleman Roosterman.[6]

The paintings were sold from the collection of Paul van Cuyck (1817–1865), a collector from Belgium who was said to have had a valuable collection of modern

Sale 1669: Sale Alphonse Oudry, Paris (Drouot, M. Febvre), 16/17 April 1869, no. 31. Lot 30 is also Hals, portrait of a man. Because of the difference in dimensions, it is not certain if it is the pendant to 31. According to the description, the subject cannot be Tieleman Roosterman (not in Hofstede de Groot 1910).

6 Both paintings are described as 'vu a mi-corps' rather than 'jusqu'aux genoux'; however, no other paintings meet the descriptions.

Fig. 1. Frans Hals, *Portrait of Catharina Brugman*, 1634. Canvas, 115 × 85 cm. Private collection

paintings and Old Masters.[7] Concerning the latter, the auction catalogue presented a rather small collection, including Frans Hals, Pieter de Hooch and Jan Steen. The most expensive among the *tableaux anciens* was a Nicolas Poussin, acquired by the Musée de Rouen for 7,000 francs.[8]

The portrait of Tieleman Roosterman might have found its way into Jakob Gsell's collection immediately after this auction in February 1866.[9] It was certainly in his possession when he died in 1871. Sold at auction in 1872, it then entered Anselm von Rothschild's collection in Vienna. The painting was stolen by the Nazis and later assigned to Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum before being restored to the Rothschild heirs in 1999. When the work was put up for sale that same year, the Cleveland Museum of Art bought it for what was then a record sum for a Frans Hals.[10]

Catharina's portrait reappears in the literature a little later than Tieleman's. Wilhelm von Bode saw it in Paris in 1883, alongside several other portraits by Frans Hals, in the collection of Count André Mniszech (Volhynia, Poland, 1823–1905 Paris).[11] Since Bode did not mention it in his description of Mniszech's collection in 1871, the count must have acquired it sometime between 1871 and 1883.[12]

An ancestral portrait in Count Mniszech's dining room

The artist and collector Count André Mniszech acquired ten paintings by Frans Hals between 1860 and 1883.[13] Seven were authenticated by Seymour Slive.[14] Tommasz de Rosset drew attention to the Polish count in 2003, when he published a biography and a description of his art collection.[15]

7 Lacroix 1862, p. 84. His caricature portrait was drawn by Eugène Giraud (1806–1881); Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes, between 1858 and 1870, inv. no. IFN-10508900.

8 Sale 1866 (note 5).

9 Iacono 2007, referring to Waagen 1866, vol. 1, p. 318, who mentions 'Ein männliches Bildniss, in der Linken einen Handschuh. Lebensgross. Flüchtig.' He based his description on information received from Arthur Mündler. Tieleman Roosterman has '*an* der Linken einen Handschuh' rather than 'in'. I also doubt if the painting in this description is Tieleman because of the use of the term *flüchtig*. A portrait of a man with a glove in his left hand (Slive 2014, p. 304) was acquired by Gsell after 1866, so it cannot refer to that painting. But it might have been another Frans Hals with Gsell in 1866.

10 Sale: London, Christie's, 8 July 1999, no. R219 (£8,251,500).

11 Von Bode 1883, pp. 64 and 84. According to a handwritten note on a copy in the RKD (200301435), the portrait of a young woman depicts Catharina Brugman.

12 Von Bode 1871, p. 23; De Rosset 2003, p. 191.

13 For all biographical information on Mniszech in this article, see De Rosset 2003.

14 Attributed to Frans Hals: Slive 1970–74 , vol. 3, nos. 22, 38, 39, 94, 96, 149–150. Copy: ibid., nos. L3–4. Not in Slive: 'a fool' (Von Bode 1883, no. 62) and a portrait of a man (possibly Von Bode 1883, no. 64, there erroneously as Van Middelhoven and so in Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, as no. 38).

15 De Rosset 2003.

Andrzej Jerzy Mniszech was born in 1823 at Wisniowiec Palace, between Lviv and Kyiv, then part of eastern Poland. He married Countess Anna Potocka (1827–1885). In 1849 a son was born, Leon (1849–1901). Around 1854, the family were forced to leave Poland. Much of their property was sold, but approximately 100 paintings, mainly family portraits, travelled with the family to Paris.[16]

Hôtel Mniszech was on 16 Rue Daru, near Parc Monceau, a short distance from where Adèle de Rothschild and Charles Ephrussy held their collections, and not far from the parental home of Moïse de Camondo.[17] The eclectic art collection kept by the count in his palatial townhouse included family portraits brought from Poland, all kinds of paintings, European and Asian prints, and European and Asian applied art.[18]

André Mniszech was an artist and had been apprenticed to Jean François Gigoux (1806–1894) and Léon Cogniet (1794–1880).[19] Mniszech showed work at salons and exhibitions.[20] He made annual journeys to the Netherlands and Belgium to study the Old Masters, whose style he emulated.[21] While in the Low Countries, he cultivated a network of friends in Dutch artistic circles, including Daniël Franken Dzn and Abraham and Louisa Willet Holthuysen. Franken and Mnsizech published a printed album of selected drawings from their own collections by a mutual friend of theirs, Adolphe Mouilleron.[22] Old photographs of self-portraits of Mniszech with his second wife are kept in the collection of the house that the Willet Holthuysens bequeathed as a museum (figs. 3 and 4).

They leave little doubt that Frans Hals was Mnsizech's primary inspiration. Among his collection of over a hundred Old Masters, the ten paintings by Hals occupied a prominent place. Despite the exceptional sum fetched by the Wallace Collection's *Laughing Cavalier* at auction in 1865, paintings by Frans Hals did not command the highest prices. Mniszech actually acquired his paintings for relatively modest amounts – a fact of which, the press reported, he was 'niet weinig trotsch'.[23]

16 Fondation Custodia, Marques des Collections online, L4788, contribution by T. de Rosset, consulted 3 October 2022.

17 Stanislas Kraland, Paris, identified the later demolished house in an aerial photo by R. Henrard (1900–1975), dating from 1952; Paris, Musée Carnavalet, Histoire de Paris, inv. no. PH344-7972. It is visible in the centre right, next to the Russian Orthodox cathedral.

18 Marques des Collections (note 16), L4788.

19 Ibid.

20 Exhib. cat. *Salon de 1888*, 1888, p. 150; *Tentoonstelling van kunstwerken van levende Meesters*, Amsterdam, October 1880; *Bulletin Polonais littéraire scientifique et artistique* 15 June 1905, p. 165.

21 Ibid., p. 165.

22 Loos 1987, pp. 201–214.

23 *Sumatra Bode* 13 February 1909, p. 6: 'not a little proud'. 'En de oude graaf André Mniszech was er niet weinig trotsch op dat hij zijn Hals'en voor 800 à 1000 franken per stuk had weten machtig te worden.'

Figs. 3. and 4. Berthaud Frères, photographs of Andre's Mniszech's *Self-Portrait* and portrait of his second wife in historic costumes, both 285 × 125 mm. Amsterdam Museum (inv. nos. FA 112–113)

When buying, Mniszech seems to have followed the latest art history publications in combination with his own taste and preference rather than popular opinion. The way he displayed the works in his home also reflects this approach. At least three works by Hals were among the portraits Mniszech displayed in his dining room. The paintings were framed in such a way that they appeared to be part of the panelling, just as they had been in Mniszech's parental home, Wisniowiec Palace.[24]

24 De Rosset 2003, pp. 93–97.

His love for Frans Hals's portraits is also evident from the Mniszech family's financial records. When Mniszech used the dowry he received to pay off his substantial debts, his wife became the owner of the bulk of his collection.[25] At her death in 1885, she left her collection to their son Léon (1849–1901). And when the latter died, his collection was sold at auction.[26] Although this included several of the paintings by Frans Hals, the six portraits did not form part of the son's estate, as Mniszech had removed them to the house on Rue de Boissière, where he lived with his second wife, Isabelle Marrier de La Gâtinerie (1840–1910).

In 1888, Abraham Bredius visited the count after viewing the collections of Alphonse de Rothschild and Nathaniel de Rothschild, not far from Mniszech's new home. He was highly impressed by the portraits of Michiel van Middelhoven and Sara Hessix. It is unclear whether he saw Catharina Brugman, as he noted only two other Hals portraits. Upon his departure he reported: 'nog vele andere mooie stukken – alles veel te gauw en haastig gezien.'[27]

Mniszech's predilection for Frans Hals is discussed extensively in De Rosset's publication mentioned above. Yet Hals is not the only artist whose work was well represented in the Parisian collection. The notion that Mniszech followed his own artistic taste rather than prevailing fashion is further supported by the presence of ten portraits by Jan van Ravesteyn and twelve paintings attributed to Jan van Goyen.[28] Together, these three artists accounted for a third of Mniszech's collection of Dutch Old Masters.

Six portraits by Frans Hals for sale

Mniszech continued to collect until his death on 11 May 1905, after a seven-month illness.[29] Later that year, his widow offered to sell the six portraits to London's National Gallery. When the museum declined to buy the portraits as a group, they were sold separately to various collectors and dealers. The first of these, in May 1906, was John Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913), who bought the Bodolphe pendants through Jacques Seligmann for 800,000 francs.[30] According to Max Friedländer,

25 Correspondence between T. de Rosset and the author, 16 June 2021.

26 Sale: Paris, Chevallier (expert Féral), 28 April 1902, L.60106.

27 The Hague, RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History, Abraham Bredius Archive (0380), inv. no. 1035: 'Many other beautiful pieces – seen everything far too quickly and hastily.'

28 De Rosset 2003, pp. 93, 96, and 97.

29 *L'Abeille de Fontainebleau* 20 (1905), p. 2.

30 Berlin, Zentralarchiv, SMB-ZA, Nachlass Bode, 191315, *Briefe von Max Friedländer*, o.D. 1892–1928. Friedländer in a letter to Von Bode, 17 May 1906 (p. 2) and 21 May 1906 (p. 7); with many thanks to Suzanne Laemers for bringing these letters to my attention.

Franz Kleinberger intended to buy two of the portraits.[31] These were the *Portrait of Catharina Brugman*, which he acquired on 28 May 1906, and probably also the *Portrait of a Woman*, now in Baltimore (see p. 62, fig. 16), which he sold to August de Ridder (1837–1911). By now, the Hals portraits that Mniszech had been able to obtain for relatively modest sums, had become a good deal more expensive: 'Voor [...] de predikant van Middelhoven en zijne vrouw the Reverend Middelhoven and his wife [the portrait of Sara Hessix] [...] werd tezamen tweehonderd vijftig duizend franken gevraagd en toen zij afzonderlijk verkocht werden, hebben zij nog meer opgebracht'.[32] Kleinberger also helped these portraits find a new home in 1908. In January of that year, the *Portrait of Sara Hessix* joined De Ridder's collection for 250,000 francs,[33] while its companion was sold a month later to Adolphe Schloss (1842–1910).[34]

The *Portrait of Catharina Brugman* remained with Kleinberger the longest – owned jointly with Eugene Kraemer and Nathan Wildenstein.[35] Anton Mensing and Frits Lugt probably saw the painting when they visited Kleinberger in Paris in June 1907.[36] Later that year, the painting featured in Mensing and Lugt's summer exhibition at Frederick Muller & Co. in Amsterdam.[37] Perhaps Kleinberger was hoping the Frans Hals would do as well as the *View of Leiden from the Northeast* by Jan van Goyen. That painting had appeared in an earlier Muller exhibition in 1903, and was purchased by the city of Leiden on the advice of Wilhelm Martin, at the time deputy director of the Mauritshuis.[38] The *New York Herald* hailed Catharina Brugman as the show's *pièce de résistance,* as did some of the Dutch press.[39] Others, by contrast, reserved their acclaim for Rembrandt's *Portrait of a Seated Woman with Her Hands Clasped*, now in the Leiden Collection.[40] The Dutch papers were just as enthusiastic about Hals as they were about Rembrandt, however, not to mention a *Poultry Seller* by Jan Steen and the (now circle of) Aelbert Cuyp, which was acquired

31 Ibid., 21 May 1906 (p. 7).

32 *Sumatra Bode,* 13 February 1909, p. 6: 'For [...] the Reverend Middelhoven and his wife [the portrait of Sara Hessix] [...] a total of two hundred and fifty thousand francs was asked, and when they were sold separately, they fetched even more.'

33 New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art archive, *Kleinberger Gallery Records*, record no. 7875.

34 Ibid., record no. 7874.

35 Ibid., record no. 7336.

36 Heijbroek 2010, p. 52.

37 Exhibition, Amsterdam, Frederik Muller & Co, July–September 1907, no. 13 (without provenance).

38 Heijbroek 2010, pp. 40–41; Leiden, Lakenhal, inv. no. S115.

39 *The New York Herald*, European Edition, Paris, 15 September 1907, supplement d'art, p. 1: 'Le morceau de résistance me parait être un portrait de femme par Franz Hals [...] L'oeuvre est d'un superbe couleur, largement et somptueusement peinte'. *Het Nieuws van de Dag, Kleine Courant*, 9 July 1907, p. 2: 'Een tweede meesterwerk is een uitnemend vrouwenportret door Frans Hals'.

40 *Het Vaderland*, 20 July 1907, second evening edition B; New York, The Leiden Collection, inv. no. RR-113.

by the Rijksmuseum.[41] Despite the lavish praise in the press, the Amsterdam gallery was unable to find a buyer for the Frans Hals. When prospective sales to Martin and Eleanore Bromberg-Kann and Otto Gerstenberg failed to materialize in 1908, Kleinberger bought out his joint owners in 1909.[42] He found a buyer a few months later: on 2 April 1910, Marcus Kappel became the new owner of the *Portrait of Catharina Brugman* for 225,000 francs. And so Catharina Brugman moved from the dining room of a Polish count in Paris to the modern, museum-style *Oberlichtgalerie* of a Berlin millionaire.

In the Kappelschen Kunstsammlung

Marcus Kappel was born in Hersel, between Bonn and Cologne, in 1839. He and his brother David had worked for their father in the grain trade in Cologne until 1893.[43] At the same time, he had also made a career as a banker and set up several companies until retiring from business in 1897.[44] Henceforth, he was able to devote his time and his home at 14 Tiergartenstrasse in Berlin to his hobby: collecting art. He was a mere fifteen years younger than Mniszech, yet his approach to the display of art was completely different. While Mnsizech had based his acquisitions entirely on personal taste, Kappel acquired highly valued items on the advice of Wilhelm von Bode: mainly seventeenth-century Dutch works and Italian Renaissance pieces. In the collection catalogue that Bode compiled for Kappel, he remarked that while it was hard to find good Rembrandt paintings, it was even more difficult to find as fine a Frans Hals work as the *Portrait of Catharina Brugman*.[45]

Die Kappelsche Gemäldesammlung was one of the leading private collections in Berlin at the start of the twentieth century.[46] The paintings included two more works by Frans Hals: the *Portrait of Isaac Abrahamsz Massa* (San Diego, Fine Arts Gallery) and the small *Portrait of a Man* (Hans Kuckei Stiftung, on loan to the Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem).[47] Besides Old Masters and Renaissance paintings Kappel collected miniatures and owned a large number of drawings by Adolph von Menzel.

41 *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 22 July 1907, second evening edition, p. 7. *R.K. Dagblad het huisgezin*, 1 September 1907, second edition. The Jan Steen might be Braun 1980, no. 105 (whereabouts unknown). Circle of Albert Cuyp, *VOC Senior Merchant with his Wife and an Enslaved Servant*, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. nr. SK-A-2350).

42 New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art archive (note 33), record no. 7336.

43 *Berliner-Börsen Zeitung*, evening edition, 30 December 1893, p. 3.

44 Kuhrau 2005, p. 277.

45 Von Bode 1914, p. 11.

46 *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, morning edition, 21 January 1920 p. 3

47 Slive 1970–74, vol. 3, p. 58, no. 103 and p. 103, no. 199, respectively.

Fig. 5. The *Oberlichtgalerie* in Marcus Kappel's Berlin house. From W. Martin, *Alt-Holländische Bilder, Sammeln / Bestimmen / Konservieren*, Berlin 1921. The Hague, RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History, Wilhelm Martin Archive (0327, inv. no. 165)

Kappel displayed his collection in a museum-style gallery that he installed in his house. This followed the latest theories, with the displays lit not through windows on either side, but by skylights in the ceiling – hence the name *Oberlichtgalerie* (fig. 5). The architect was his son-in-law Georg Rathenau (1866–1922).[48] Wilhelm Martin, director of the Mauritshuis, responded enthusiastically: 'Die prächtige Oberlichtgalerie der Sammlung Kappel in Berlin zeigen uns die Abb. 105 und 106, wo man deutlich die wunderbar einheitliche Beleuchtung und das ausserordentlich geschmackvolle Arrangement sieht'.[49] 'So ein besonderer Saal', Martin continued, 'ist dann durchweg auch der 'geweihte' Teil des Hauses, wohin sich der Besitzer zurückzieht, wo er ausruht und wo sich für ihn der Kunstgenuss konzentriert.'[50]

There was a clear division in the Kappel household between the Oberlichtsaal collection, which Kappel had assembled himself, without involving his wife Mathilde

48 Von Bode 1914, p. 2.

49 Martin 1921, pp. 210–211.

50 Kuhrau 2005, p. 108, referring to Martin 1921, p. 208.

Hirsch (1845–1919), and the paintings displayed in the residential section of their home, which the couple chose together.[51] Wilhelm von Bode advised Kappel on the acquisition of practically his entire collection, as he himself explained,[52] although it is possible that Kappel also bought works on advice received elsewhere. Either way, he was seen at auctions in the company of the Parisian dealer Kleinberger and Friedländer, director of the Berlin Kupferstichkabinett.[53] The latter was of course strongly associated with Bode, while regarding the dealer, Bode is known to have connected 'his' collectors with dealers directly.[54] Bode was responsible for the presentation of the displays in the Oberlichtgalerie, 'der daher auch wie eine Dependance der entsprechenden Abteilung im Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum aussah'.[55]

Kaiser-Friedrich-Museums-Verein

Sven Kuhrau's 2005 survey of the various art collections in imperial Germany provides an excellent overview of the world in which Marcus Kappel operated – a widespread network of well-known German art collectors that flourished in the years 1900 to 1920. One of Kappel's neighbours on Tiergartenstrasse, in addition to his brother David at number 15, was another collector, James Simon who resided at number 15a. Simon had funded the excavation of the bust of Queen Nefertiti in Egypt and ensured that the piece came to Berlin. Both Kappel and he were members of the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museums-Verein, the hub of Berlin's network of art collectors. Along with other members of the Verein, such as Oscar Huldschinsky, they regularly lent paintings from their private collections for exhibitions curated by Bode and Friedländer.[56] The first Kaiser-Friedrich-Museums-Verein exhibition to include work lent by Kappel was in 1906: he contributed six paintings.[57] He also participated in the 1909 exhibition.[58]

Emperor Wilhelm II was intrigued by the reputation that Marcus Kappel's collection had gained. On a Thursday morning in February 1913, the German monarch visited the Oberlichtgalerie.[59] For almost an hour, Marcus and Mathilde Kappel gave 'Seine Majestät der Kaiser und König' a tour of various parts of the collection,

51 Ibid., p. 108.
52 Von Bode 1930, vol. 2, pp. 228–229.
53 Heijbroek 2010, pp. 86 and 89.
54 Kingzett 1976, p. 159.
55 Kuhrau 2005, p. 147.
56 Ibid., catalogue of collectors, pp. 268–289.
57 Kaiser Friedrich-Museums-Verein 1906.
58 Kaiser Friedrich-Museums-Verein 1909.
59 *Berliner Tageblatt und Handels-Zeitung*, morning edition 21 February 1913, p. 5.

accompanied by Wilhelm von Bode. It was a rare honour for the couple, not least since the emperor seldom visited anyone without a title. Not long after, the Kaiser awarded Marcus Kappel an Order of the Crown, second class.[60] News of this memorable visit, and of the admiration the emperor had expressed, were still the talk of the town when Kappel visited an auction in Amsterdam a few months later.[61]

A year later, in 1914, Kappel lent no fewer than 27 works for a Kaiser-Friedrich-Museums-Verein exhibition, to which the emperor himself also contributed, according to the list of patrons. Kappel's contribution included paintings which we still regard as among the finest in his possession, such as: *Portrait of a Young Woman, Simonetta* by Botticelli (Marubeni collection, Japan), the *View of the Westerkerk, Amsterdam* by Jan van der Heyden (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), a sun-drenched *Stille See* by Jan van de Cappelle, a work by Nicolaas Maes applauded by Bode in his autobiography, a *Madonna and Child* by Joos van Cleve, no fewer than five paintings attributed to Rembrandt, and for the first time, the *Portrait of Catharina Brugman*.[62]

A major disappointment for the German art world

In January 1920, 'nach längeren Leiden [...] einer der feinsten Kunstsammler Berlins' passed away, shortly after his wife Mathilde.[63] Kappel's collection included six works by Rembrandt and three by Hals at the time, and he was hailed as one of the finest art collectors in Berlin, together with his neighbour James Simon.[64] For the German public, there seemed to be a silver lining to this otherwise sad event: Marcus Kappel was said to have left all his paintings to the Kaiser Friedrich Museum.[65] Apparently, Marcus and Mathilde had made their decision and drawn up a will in 1913, two weeks after the emperor's visit to the Oberlichtsaal.[66]

Two highlights were specifically named in the press: the *Portrait of Catharina Brugman* by Frans Hals and a *Self-Portrait* by Rembrandt, now in the Mauritshuis: 'zwei Bilder, die die heisse Sehnsucht jedes Museumdirektors erwecken'.[67] In an age in which many German collections were being snapped up by foreign collectors,

60 Ibid., 25 February 1913, p. 4

61 Heijbroek 2010, p. 86, referring to *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 28 May 1913.

62 Kaiser Friedrich-Museums-Verein 1914. On the Maes, see Von Bode 1930, vol. 2, p. 25.

63 *Berliner Tageblatt und Handels-Zeitung*, morning edition 21 January 1920, p. 2

64 *De Telegraaf*, 31 January 1920, p. 2.

65 *Berliner Tageblatt und Handels-Zeitung*, morning edition 26 February 1913, p. 5

66 Berlin, Leo Baeck Institute Archives, *Kappel-Kristeller Collection*, AR6328, MF893, 'Kappel'sches Testament', 30 August 1892 and 14 February 1913.

67 *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, morning edition 21 January 1920, p. 3: 'two paintings to whet the appetite of any museum director'.

it felt enormously reassuring to German connoisseurs. After all: 'Für den Kunstreichtum, oder besser für den Kunstarmut Deutschlands würde die Emigration der Kappelschen Kunstsammlung einer unersetzlichen Verlust bedeuten.'[68] Moreover, several collectors who had made similar promises had backed out when the *Novemberrevolution* erupted in 1918. But not, apparently, Marcus Kappel: 'Es gab doch noch Kapitalisten, die ihren Reichtum im Dienste der Gemeinschaft verwalteten!'.[69]

It was not long, however, before it became clear that the revolution of 1918 had also caused Marcus and Mathilde Kappel to change their minds. It was not the nation, but the children who inherited everything. The disappointment in German art circles was palpable. A journalist even accused the 'Kapitalist' Marcus Kappel of unethical conduct: 'er hat das [Kaiser Friedrich] Museum geschädigt. Oft genug hat das Museum auf einen wichtigen Ankauf verzichtet (Rubens Isabelle Brant!), weil Kappel sagte: "Lassen Sie mich es kaufen für die paar Jahre, die ich noch lebe; dann fällt es ja automatisch an das Museum!"'.[70]

The truth is a little more complicated: in a codicil to their will, written in the summer of 1919, Mathilde and Marcus wrote that due to rising property taxes (the *Reichsnotopfer* of up to 65 per cent) and considering the increased inheritance tax, their children would receive practically nothing if the paintings were donated to the Prussian state. They had therefore decided, with pain in their hearts, to revise their will.[71] The nation was offered one last chance to acquire the paintings: if their estate were taxed at 10 per cent, the collection would go to the museum after all. But Prussia needed money, not paintings and so the collection was divided among the three children: Hedwig Martha Kristeller-Kappel (1869–1928), Anthonie Elise Friederike Noah-Kappel (1871–1923), and Mary Betty Rathenau-Kappel (1876–1906). Since the youngest daughter, Mary, had already died, her share of the inheritance passed to her children.

Dispersal of the collection

Kappel's collection was divided into three. Only the Rembrandt *Self-Portrait* would be owned by all heirs collectively, before it came into full possession of Kappel's grandchildren Ernest Rathenau (Berlin 1897–1986 Bad Nauheim) and

68 Ibid., p. 3: 'The disappearance of the Kappel art collection would represent an irreparable loss to the arts, indeed an impoverishment of the arts in Germany.'

69 *Vorwärts*, 23 April 1920, p. 2.

70 *Jeversches Wochenblatt*, 27 April 1920, p.4: 'he had cheated the [Kaiser Friedrich] Museum. The museum had often passed up opportunities to buy important items (like Rubens's *Isabella Brant*!) after Kappel had assured them: "Let me buy it for my few remaining years; the museum will get it later anyway!"' This refers to the Rubens portrait now in The Cleveland Museum of Art, Mr. and Mrs. William H. Marlatt Fund (1947.207).

71 Berlin, Leo Baeck Institute Archives (note 66) *Nachtrag zur unseren Testament*, 24 August 1919, pp. 67–69.

Fig. 6. A.G. van Agtmaal (1887–1960) or J.G. van Agtmaal (1912–1990), Rijksmuseum, exhibition room 227, with the Haarlem School, 1934. Gelatin silver print, 165 × 228 mm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. SSA-F-00739-1)

Ellen Ettlinger-Rathenau (Berlin 1902–1994 Oxford), who also inherited *Catharina Brugman*. They placed the Rembrandt on long-term loan with the Rijksmuseum, followed sometime later by *Catharina* (fig. 6). Her portrait arrived at the museum on 23 January 1928, as was widely reported in the press.[72] It was shown in an exhibition of Dutch art at the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 1929.

In 1930, the Cassirer auction house in Berlin put up part of the Kappel collection for sale.[73] The reserves were set far too high, however. There were allegations in the press that this was done with a view to driving up prices for future sales, a commonly employed tactic at the time.[74] Agents were planted in the room to bid up the price and, if the lot failed to reach its reserve, to conclude a simulated sale. In reality, such items remained in the hands of the original seller. They would then

72 E.g., *De Telegraaf*, 10 March 1928, p. 4: 'Een belangrijk damesportret van Frans Hals dateerend uit 1634 en voorstellende Catharina Roosterman is in het Rijksmuseum te Amsterdam tijdelijk uit een Duitsche verzameling in bruikleen ontvangen.'

73 Sale: Kappel – Berlin, Cassirer and Helbing, 25 November 1930.

74 *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 27 November 1930, p. 6.

offer it for sale again anonymously and with a high asking price via a dealer or auctioneer (or, as frequently occurred in Germany, an auctioneer who was also a dealer). The inflated price was justified by the level of the winning bid at auction. Such practices were often cooked up between seller and auctioneer, both of whom stood to benefit financially. The result, to the consternation of bidders, was a considerable lack of transparency in the auction room. Dr Helbing, who presided over the auction of the Kappel collection, refused to countenance such tactics and announced that bidding would open straightaway at the reserve prices set by the owners. These were indeed far too high for the market, with the result that just four of the 24 paintings ended up being sold.

The *Portrait of Catharina Brugman* and the Rembrandt *Self-Portrait* were not on the list of auctioned works. As Jews, the Rathenaus fled Germany after 1933, and tried to move their property to the United Kingdom. At the time, they owned half the Kappel collection, since their cousin Gerhard Noah had died childless. The other half was owned by three cousins: Hans, Anne, and Dorothea Kristeller. In 1935, *Catharina Brugman* was shipped to London along with various other paintings and drawings.[75] The Rijksmuseum refused to return the Rembrandt[76] and it was subsequently seized by the Nazis, as were the other paintings that had remained in Germany.

The reparations imposed on Germany at Versailles in 1918, the *Novemberrevolution* and the dispersal of the great art collections, growing antisemitism, the outbreak of another world war and the 1945 bombings that destroyed the neighbourhoods where the Kappel family and their acquaintances had lived, all combined, therefore, to extinguish a fascinating aspect of German art collecting of the early twentieth century.

The *Portrait of Catharina Brugman* and a new generation of collectors

The Rathenaus managed to escape the Nazis. Ernest moved to the United Kingdom, and from there to New York. Ellen left Berlin in the early 1930s and settled in the Bavarian countryside, hoping to find safety there. In 1938, the local mayor warned her that it would not be long before he would have to confiscate her passport.[77] Without hesitating, she packed what she could in her car and left the country. She settled in Oxford, where she had already sent her children to boarding school in 1934.[78] For the Kristellers, who owned the other half of the collection, events took

75 Haarlem, NHA, *Archief Rijksmuseum en rechtsvoorgangers*, 476, inv. no. 2.2.4.5-375, afgesloten bruiklenen, letter of 25 November 1935, Alfred Scharf, London, confirming the delivery of works including the *Portrait of Catharina Brugman*.

76 L. Heyting, 'Rathenau's Rembrandt', *NRC* 27 March 1998. See also NHA (note 75).

77 Correspondence between one of Rathenau's descendants and author, 1 October 2022.

78 Ibid., 29 September 2022.

Fig. 7. The portraits of Tieleman and Catharina Brugman reunited in the London National Gallery, September 2023. Photograph: National Gallery, London

a different turn. Hans Kristeller died in Switzerland in 1944. Anne and Dorothea Kristeller were murdered in the war.[79]

The *Portrait of Catharina Brugman* remained in the United Kingdom until 1977. In the autumn of that year, it was lent, together with several other paintings from the Kappel collection, to the Metropolitan Museum in New York,[80] where it remained until it was sold. Thanks to the generosity of the current owners, the portraits of Catharina Brugman and Tieleman Roosterman have now been reunited for the duration of the exhibitions in London, Amsterdam and Berlin (fig. 7).

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79 Berlin, Leo Baeck Institute Archives (note 66), letter Dr Julius Fliess, 7 March 1948.

80 Metropolitan Museum loan, inv. no. L.1977.41.1.

13. ‘Because you simply cannot argue about art with a chemist’: Scientific Research on Frans Hals’s Paintings in the Netherlands during the 1920s

Michiel Franken

Abstract: This article focuses on three early examples of scientific examination of paintings in the Netherlands in the 1920s using work by Frans Hals. The reason for such research differed in each instance. The first case involved the restoration of Hals’s group portraits in Haarlem. The second example related to whether a newly surfaced painting was by Frans Hals or was a forgery. Finally, scientific examination of a heavily overpainted painting in Edinburgh revealed a work by Frans Hals previously believed to have been lost.

Keywords: Connoisseurship, Forgeries, Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, Derix de Wild, Martin de Wild, Gosen van der Sleen, Frans Scheffer, Theo van Wijngaarden

The question of whether a small painting depicting a laughing cavalier was painted by Frans Hals in the seventeenth century or more recently by a forger caused quite a stir in the 1920s, not only in the Netherlands, but also abroad. The considerable attention the case received at the time was due mainly to the important role played by the great connoisseur of Dutch painting, Cornelis Hofstede de Groot (1863–1930, fig. 1). When his authority on the attribution of paintings came under fire due to his assessment of *The Laughing Cavalier*, he defended himself vigorously. Hofstede de Groot had previously been involved in polemics over the attribution of a painting, but until then only with other art experts and not with a chemist, as in the case of *The Laughing Cavalier*. It is therefore interesting to look at this controversy as an early example of the application of scientific research to the assessment of paintings. In this article, I discuss the issue of *The Laughing Cavalier* and several other early examples of

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DOI: 10.5117/9789048566068_CH13

Fig. 1. Henk Meijer (1884–1970), *Portrait of Cornelis Hofstede de Groot (1863–1930)*, 1925. Canvas, 110 × 75 cm. The Hague, RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History

scientific analysis of paintings in the Netherlands from the 1920s. The reason for conducting such research differed in each case, but they all have in common that they relate to works by Frans Hals.

A Dutch cleaning controversy

The first example involves the restorations of the group portraits by Frans Hals in Haarlem between 1909 and 1927 (see pp. 110–129). It was already the intention during the restoration of *The Regents of the Old Men's Almshouse* in 1910–1911 by Carel F.L. de Wild (1870–1922) that the other seven group portraits by Hals in the

Haarlem Museum would be treated by the same restorer from The Hague.[1] However, the new director of the Frans Hals Museum, Gerrit D. Gratama (1874–1965), who was appointed in 1913, had to look for another restorer, as De Wild had left for New York following the successful treatment of the *Regents* painting to work for the art dealer Knoedler & Co. On the recommendation of Mauritshuis director Wilhelm Martin (1876–1954), Derix de Wild (1869–1932), who had continued his brother's restoration studio in The Hague after Carel's departure to New York, was given the assignment in 1918 to clean another group portrait by Hals: *The Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital*.[2] The result of this treatment evoked both positive and negative reactions, with critics including the director of the Rijksmuseum, Barthold W.F. van Riemsdijk (1850–1942). Their objections mostly concerned the appearance of the painting, but some critics also levelled the serious accusation that the painting had been irreparably damaged by the restoration process. According to them, not only the varnish but also some of the original paint had been removed during cleaning. They were opposed on principle to removing old varnish, believing it ought to be regenerated instead according to the method developed and published by the German chemist Max J. von Pettenkofer (1818–1901).[3] Rather than removing heavily crackled, blanched varnish, regeneration restored its transparency with the aid of alcohol vapours. From 1871, this treatment was very common in the Netherlands and had also been frequently applied to the group portraits by Hals in Haarlem. It is striking that no damage to the paint layer had been alleged after the treatment of *The Regents of the Old Men's Almshouse* in 1910–1911, even though the heavily discoloured and crackled varnish had been removed there too. The lack of criticism was most likely due to the coloured varnish applied to the painting after cleaning. *The Regents of St Elisabeth's Hospital*, on the other hand, was given an uncoloured layer of varnish by order of director Gratama after cleaning. This decision, which was supported by Hofstede de Groot who supervised the restoration on behalf of the Supervisory Committee of the Frans Hals Museum, arose from Gratama's conviction that a painting ought not to be 'improved' during restoration, but that an artist's work should be shown in the best way possible as it has come down to us.[4]

Gratama was convinced that no original paint had been lost during Derix de Wild's cleaning of the painting, parrying the criticism in a striking and original way. Not only did he commission Derix to treat another group portrait by Hals, namely his earliest civic guard painting of 1616 (fig. 2), he also asked the Haarlem chemist Gosen van der Sleen (1872–1938) to investigate whether the cotton swabs

1 For information on C.F.L. de Wild, see Van Duijn and Te Marvelde 2024, pp. 249–254.

2 For information on D. de Wild, see Van Duijn and Te Marvelde 2024, pp. 254–257.

3 Von Pettenkofer 1870, in the Dutch translation of W.A. Hopman published in Amsterdam in 1871.

4 Gratama 1918.

Fig. 2. Frans Hals, *Banquet of the officers of the St. George Civic Guard*, 1616. Canvas, 175 × 234 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. OS I-109)

used to remove the varnish contained traces of the paint from Hals's civic guard painting.[5] Van der Sleen's report, published in 1922, concluded that the removed varnish contained no such traces.[6] His analysis was not limited to detecting paint in the varnish: Van der Sleen also looked in detail at the properties of oil paints and varnishes with regard to ageing and solubility – the factors that had led Von Pettenkofer to develop the regeneration method as a safe alternative to removing aged varnish and which were cited by critics of cleaning. Van der Sleen concluded that Von Pettenkofer's observations were outdated and that the solvent used to remove the varnish from the Hals painting did not pose a threat to the paint layers. His conclusion and the finding that the original paint had not been damaged by the removal of the varnish paved the way for the decision to have all remaining group portraits restored by Derix de Wild.

Although the desirability of involving chemists in the restoration of paintings by Frans Hals had already been discussed in 1910, Van der Sleen's research, some ten years later, was the first time that this actually happened in the Netherlands. Thanks to his published report and the numerous lectures and articles by Gratama, it also received considerable attention, not only in the Netherlands itself, but also abroad. For example, Arthur P. Laurie (1861–1949), professor of chemistry at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, considered the restoration

5 Gratama 1920.

6 Van der Sleen 1922.

Fig. 3. Artist Unknown, *The Laughing Cavalier,* c. 1922. Panel, diameter 36 cm. Private collection, through the mediation of the Hoogsteder Museum Foundation, The Hague

of Hals's group portraits in an article on the restoration of paintings in *The Connoisseur* in 1925, in which he referred to Van der Sleen's publication as 'a very interesting report'.[7]

'Genuine or fake. Eye or chemistry'

In the next case to involve scientific analysis, it was a court that asked two museum directors and a chemist to pass judgment on the painting *The Laughing Cavalier* (fig. 3). When the painting surfaced in 1923, Hofstede de Groot wrote that after careful examination he considered it 'an authentic and caracteristic [sic] work by Frans Hals'.[8] It was sold by H.A. de Haas of The Hague as an authentic work by Hals in May 1923 for 50,000 guilders to Anton W.M. Mensing (1866–1936), head of the firm Frederik Muller & Co, who subsequently sold it on. Mensing reimbursed the buyer, however, when it became clear to him that the painting was a fake. To arrive at this judgement, he had asked several people, including the restorer Derix de Wild, for their opinions. De Wild formulated his findings as follows: 'The painting, said to have been done by Frans Hals in the seventeenth century, gives the impression

7 Laurie 1925.

8 Hofstede de Groot 1925, p. 44, appendix I.

of being of more recent date.'[9] He based this impression on the appearance of the paint layer, which had not fully hardened in several places – a phenomenon he had not previously observed in a seventeenth-century painting. Further research, he said, would reveal that the painting had not been made in the seventeenth century, but much later. According to Hofstede de Groot, a representative of Frederik Muller approached him with the information that the painting had turned out to be a fake, suggesting moreover that Hofstede de Groot ought to pay a third of the purchase price to resolve the distasteful matter. Hofstede de Groot naturally rejected this proposal, as he had only given his opinion and was not responsible for the amount of money for which the painting was sold.

Frederik Muller then filed a lawsuit against the seller of the painting in December 1923. Convinced that it was not a genuine Hals but a forgery, the firm demanded that the purchase agreement be rescinded and the purchase price of 50,000 guilders reimbursed.[10] Besides the forgery itself, it also alleged deception on the part of the seller regarding the provenance of the painting. It had supposedly come from an old family, whereas the seller had actually acquired the painting from Theo van Wijngaarden (1874–1952), a restorer of and dealer in Old Master paintings, who had been its owner in April 1923. The lawsuit did not prevent Hofstede de Groot from publishing the work in an article on newly discovered paintings by Frans Hals in *The Burlington Magazine* in August 1924.[11] In November of that year, the court appointed three experts – Charles J. Holmes (1868–1936), director of the National Gallery London, Martin, director of the Mauritshuis in The Hague, and Frans E.C. Scheffer (1883–1954), professor of chemistry at Delft University of Technology – to address the question of whether this was a seventeenth-century work by Frans Hals or a modern painting.

Each of the three wrote their own report and they came to a common conclusion.[12] While noting that it was a handsomely executed and at first glance even captivating painting, they immediately suspected that it was an imitation. In the course of their investigations, the painting was thoroughly examined and compared with a Hals picture from the Mauritshuis. A test performed with 90 per cent alcohol found this had no effect on the paint, as might be expected for a seventeenth-century painting. A subsequent test with water, however, yielded a very different result. Whereas an old oil painting would stand up well to a water test, the Cavalier's paint layer softened and dissolved. This, they concluded, was highly significant, since no painting by Hals was known to have been done with a water-soluble paint. They also pointed

9 Ibid., pp. 44–45, appendix II.
10 Ibid., pp. 45–46, appendix III.
11 Hofstede de Groot 1924.
12 Hofstede de Groot 1925, pp. 74–89, appendices XIII–XVI.

out that the use of such paint with glue rather than drying oil was a well-known forger's trick to deceive buyers. Other evidence of forgery was also cited. An X-ray image, for example, showed modern nails that had been hammered in from the front before being covered with paint identical to that in the surrounding parts. Moreover, modern pigments were found in the paint layer: a modern cobalt blue, synthetic ultramarine, and zinc white, none of which had been produced for the benefit of artists until the nineteenth century.

After the examination by the three experts, the court seemingly had enough evidence to deliver a verdict, but this did not occur. Before the court could make its ruling, Hofstede de Groot bought the painting for the price paid by Frederik Muller, evading the need for a verdict. All the same, his reputation as a connoisseur was severely damaged, particularly due to the huge attention the affair received in the press. Hofstede de Groot sought to defend himself by writing newspaper articles and a highly polemical pamphlet 'Echt of onecht. Oog of Chemie' ('Genuine or fake: Eye or chemistry'), in which he stressed that, as far as he was concerned, the painting was an authentic Frans Hals and rejected all the conclusions drawn by the three experts. In his view, an opinion on a painting could only be given by an experienced connoisseur, arguing on the first page of his pamphlet that none of the three experts qualified as such: Holmes knew nothing at all about Dutch art; you simply cannot discuss art with a chemist; and Martin, lastly, had never achieved anything positive as a connoisseur. Hofstede de Groot's broadside completely ignored the fact that each expert had been involved in the research from the perspective of his own expertise. The chemist Scheffer, for example, explicitly stated that he had no desire to intervene in questions of an aesthetic or art historical nature.

The pamphlet did not have the result Hofstede de Groot wanted: newspapers continued to speculate about the identity of the forger who had painted the Cavalier. The name of Han van Meegeren (1889–1947) was raised on occasion, but a much more frequent target was the restorer Van Wijngaarden, who claimed to have discovered and bought the *Laughing Cavalier* in England, but was unable to remember precisely where or from whom.[13] In an attempt to clear his name, Hofstede de Groot decided to have the painting restored at his home in the presence of a notary. He also invited others to attend the event on 10 June 1926. The day before, however, the painting was seized as evidence because of a charge brought against De Haas and Van Wijngaarden for fraud,[14] based in part on the statement of a person who claimed to have seen Van Wijngaarden painting the *Laughing Cavalier*.[15] Following the retraction of

13 Interview with Van Wijngaarden, published in *Haagsche Courant*, 11 June 1926. https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB04:000144286:mpeg21:p017.

14 *Haagsche Courant*, 9 June 1926. https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB04:000144284.

15 'De betwiste Frans Hals: Een "Haagsche school" van vervalschers?', *Haagsche Courant*, 10 June 1926. https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB04:000144285.

this witness statement a few months later, the prosecution was withdrawn and Hofstede de Groot got the painting back. He rescheduled the restoration for late December 1926 in the presence of restorers and other experts, including Utrecht professor of art history Willem Vogelzang (1875–1954) and Frans Hals Museum director Gratama. Tests carried out at the time confirmed what the three experts had already observed, despite which Hofstede de Groot stood by his opinion on the authenticity of the painting. The press reported, however, that the majority of those present did not share his view.[16] The *Laughing Cavalier* affair formed a prelude to famous court cases in later years, such as the Wacker trial in Berlin over forged Van Goghs in 1932 and the Van Meegeren trial in 1947. In those instances, too, scientific analysis played a part in proving that the suspect paintings were indeed forgeries. Martin A.M. de Wild (1899–1969),[17] son of the aforementioned Derix de Wild, was involved in both the Wacker and Van Meegeren trials as an expert in the scientific analysis of paintings.

The first Dutch conservation scientist

It was Martin de Wild who initiated the technical investigation of a painting in the collection of the National Galleries of Scotland in Edinburgh, the third example of this kind of investigation of a work by Frans Hals in the 1920s. In addition to being trained by his father as a painting restorer, he studied chemistry with Professor Frans Scheffer at Delft University of Technology. He gained his PhD in 1928 with a thesis on 'The Scientific Examination of Pictures', which appeared in English in 1929 and German in 1931.[18] As part of his thesis, he published a remarkable find concerning a panel by Frans Hals in Edinburgh, where he had examined the condition of Dutch paintings in the spring of 1927. The painting – a bust-length depiction of a man in a red beret with a glass in his hand, known as *The Toper* (fig. 4) – had been included in Hofstede de Groot's catalogue of Hals's paintings in 1910 as No. 77. Because the red beret and the hand with the glass appeared to be overpaintings, De Wild recommended taking an X-radiograph of the work to find out what lay beneath them. The X-ray revealed the man's original appearance, bareheaded and holding the jawbone of a cow in his right hand. Having made this discovery, De Wild removed the overpaintings. Its original appearance now regained (fig. 5), it was possible to identify the painting as one that Hofstede de Groot had listed as

16 'De Betwiste Frans Hals', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant,* avondblad B, 4 January 1927. https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:01002821:mpeg21:p009.

17 For information on A.M. de Wild, see Van Duijn and Te Marvelde 2016, pp. 821–823.

18 De Wild 1928.

Fig. 4. Frans Hals, *'The Toper'*, c. 1627. Photograph before the restoration by Martin de Wild in 1928

Fig. 5. Frans Hals, *Verdonck*, c. 1627. Panel 46.7 × 35.5 cm. Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland, presented by John J Moubray of Naemoor, 1916 (inv. no. NG 1200)

catalogue number 235 in 1910 as a lost portrait of Verdonck, hitherto known only thanks to a print by Jan van de Velde II (1593–1641).[19]

The three examinations performed by Van der Sleen, Scheffer, and Martin de Wild in the 1920s are early examples of scientific research of paintings in the Netherlands, all three of which relate to the work of Frans Hals. In conclusion, I would like to mention a later example of such research as it relates to the *Laughing Cavalier*. This latter painting in a private collection has not, as far as I know, been shown in public since the 1920s and was thus only known from old black-and-white photographs. It is not part of the Hofstede de Groot bequest in the Groninger Museum.[20] That institution does house another painting with a pipe-smoking boy from the collection of Hofstede de Groot, which he bought from Van Wijngaarden in 1923 and published, together with the *Laughing Cavalier*, as newly discovered Halses in *The Burlington Magazine* in 1924.[21] It had already been suggested at the time of the Cavalier court case that the *Pipe Smoking Boy* (fig. 6) was also a forgery.

19 Hofstede de Groot 1910, pp. 20 and 70.

20 Cat. Exhib. Groningen 2005–06.

21 Hofstede de Groot 1924.

Fig. 6. Artist Unknown, *Pipe Smoking Boy*, c. 1923. Panel 57.5 × 49 cm. Groningen, Groninger Museum, Bequest of Cornelis Hofstede de Groot (inv. no. 1931.0108)

In the end, it was Martin de Wild who, together with the chemist Wiebo Froentjes (1909–2006) unmasked the painting in 1950 as a fake, probably made by the same forger as the *Laughing Cavalier*.[22]

It may be inferred from his purchase of the two 'Hals' paintings that Hofstede de Groot placed considerable confidence in Van Wijngaarden, who abused that trust. Not only did he sell Hofstede de Groot the 'Frans Hals' paintings, but he also led him to believe that when restoring the *Laughing Cavalier* he had employed a secret process that he had invented and which could make all paint, including oil paint, soluble in water. Armed with that deceitful information, Hofstede de Groot rejected the result of the water test, which for the three experts was the first step in unmasking the *Laughing Cavalier*. It is fair to say, therefore, that a little knowledge of chemistry would have gone a long way even for a connoisseur as eminent as Hofstede de Groot.

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22 Froentjes and De Wild 1950; for additional evidence, see Keisch 1986.

14. Frans Hals Connoisseurs and Exhibitions: From Thoré to Today

John Bezold

Abstract: This analysis revisits the study of Frans Hals connoisseurs and exhibitions by mapping the evolution of scholarly attention to his work, starting in the late-nineteenth century and extending to the present. It highlights the founding roles played by connoisseurs like Théophile Thoré-Bürger, Wilhelm von Bode, Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, Wilhelm Valentiner, and Gerrit Gratama, who together have significantly shaped Hals's reputation. Special attention is given to Abraham Bredius, whose crucial yet often overlooked contributions have aided in piecing together Hals's life story. Moving beyond Seymour Slive's dominant perspectives, the discussion continues, contrasting his views with those of Claus Grimm and acknowledges the efforts of various scholars in continuing to refine understanding of Hals's work. In particular, it shines a light on Gratama's foundational role as the Frans Hals Museum's first director, advocating for a deeper appreciation of his scholarly impact on Hals studies. The narrative then transitions into examining ongoing debates and challenges that persist in reaching a consensus on Hals's oeuvre, while simultaneously hinting at future directions in connoisseurship. By adopting a comprehensive view, the essay pays tribute to past connoisseurs and exhibitions, emphasizing the vast trove of literature on Hals that remains invaluable to current and future researchers.

Keywords: Connoisseurship, Historiography, Wilhelm von Bode, Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, Wilhelm Valentiner, Abraham Bredius, Gerrit Gratama, Seymour Slive, Claus Grimm

When it comes to studying Frans Hals's life and his paintings, numerous methodological approaches can be taken. It is possible to study Hals from the perspective of his own life, in the seventeenth century – a task that entails looking into his wide social networks of family, friends, and fellow artists, mostly in Haarlem.[1] It

1 The most extensive study to approach Frans Hals in this manner, methodologically, is the recent 'biography' by Steven Nadler (Nadler 2022). For a review of the publication, see Atkins 2023.

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is also possible to study Hals's work by isolating his paintings, and focusing on the sitters he portrayed within them, and their own backgrounds and lives.[2] One can also study Hals's work in relation to his paintings *as physical objects*, divorced from the context of whom they portray and Hals's biography, instead focusing on formal aspects of each work in relation to his larger oeuvre. This last approach to studying Hals and his paintings has traditionally been the domain of scholars, curators, and connoisseurs. And it has most often occurred within museums in the Netherlands, Germany, and the USA.[3] Although there are several figures who commented on and wrote about Hals and his work, and his sons and his brother, Dirck (1591–1656), during and shortly after their lifetimes,[4] it was during the late nineteenth century that a distinct group of dedicated scholars, curators, and connoisseurs emerged within Hals studies. This cluster of Hals scholars and connoisseurs – starting from the mid-nineteenth century – collectively produced a body of literature and catalogues that *still* shape present-day understanding of Frans Hals's biography and his artistic output. This essay focuses on Hals's numerous connoisseurs and on the many museum exhibitions that have played a central role in shaping our knowledge of the artist – including his four solo exhibitions.[5]

It was Frances Suzman Jowell who, in her 1974 *Art Bulletin* article 'Thoré-Bürger and the Revival of Frans Hals', laid the groundwork for the central narrative that to this day remains ensconced in the minds of scholars and the general public with regard to Hals's appreciation.[6] In the article, she traces the work of Thoré's writings on Hals, and his efforts to bring Hals to the forefront of painters and artists active during what is historically referred to as the Dutch Golden Age (fig. 1).[7] Before Thoré's writings on Hals, she notes Englishman John Smith's (1781–1855) work on seventeenth-century Dutch artists remained the standard publication on the subject.[8] Smith is often considered to have created the modern model for a painter's catalogue raisonné: *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish and French Painters*, published in nine volumes between 1829 and 1842;[9]

2 The most extensive and exemplary study to date, concerning a sweeping overview of Hals's sitters, remains Biesboer 1989–90.

3 The most recent example of a publication on Hals that has utilized this methodology is Weller 2022. For a review of the book, see Bezold 2023.

4 In his 2022 publication, Nadler innocuously incorrectly states that Hals had fifteen children (p. 61), when in fact, he had fourteen children; three from his first marriage, and eleven from his second; see Bezold 2017. To arrive at fifteen, Nadler included doc. no. 27 from Van Thiel-Stroman 1989–90, p. 379, which cites the burial of *an* infant of a child that has since been identified as from the incorrect 'Halses' of Haarlem: 'Frans Franschoisz', in Köhler 2006, pp. 179, 182 nn. 30–31.

5 Gerson 1937, pp. 134–139; White 1962, pp. 373–377; Sutton 1990, pp. 67–70.

6 Jowell 1974, pp. 101–117.

7 Jowell 1977. For recent and historical debates on the term 'Golden Age', see Blanc 2021.

8 Jowell 1974, nn. 3–4.

9 Smith 1829–42.

Fig. 1. Gaspard-Félix Nadar (1820–1910), *Portrait of Étienne-Joseph-Théophile Thoré, alias Théophile Thoré-Bürger (1807–1869)*, c. 1865. Photograph printed by Paul Nadar (1856–1939), 22.4 × 16.2 cm

Fig. 2. Max Liebermann (1847–1935), *Portrait of Wilhelm von Bode (1845–1929)*, 1904. Canvas, 114 × 92 cm. Berlin, Nationalgalerie, SMB / Jörg P. Anders

that is, until Cornelis Hofstede de Groot (1863–1930), published an updated version of that publication, in ten volumes, between 1907 and 1928 (see p. 212, fig. 1).[10] Hofstede de Groot was a protege of Wilhelm von Bode (1845–1929); Bode published his Hals study in 1871: *Frans Hals und seine Schule* (fig. 2).[11]

Wilhelm Valentiner (1880–1958), like Hofstede de Groot, was yet another Hals connoisseur active in this era – most often as a museum director in the USA.[12]

Foundational Figures and Forging New Paths: From Houbraken to Gratama

During this period, German and Dutch Hals scholars heavily relied on biographic information about Hals by Arnold Houbraken (1660–1719) and Adriaen van der Willigen (1766–1841), who both wrote extensively about Dutch painters. Houbraken

10 Hofstede de Groot 1930, p. 274; Hofstede de Groot 1907–28.

11 Von Bode 1871, pp. 1–66.

12 Van Gelder 1959 pp. 117–118; Weller 2014, pp. 140–153. For a biography of Valentiner, see Sterne 1980.

was focussed on attributing works to Hals rather than reconstructing his biographical narrative.[13] Van der Willigen, a Haarlem resident and playwright, contributed to Hals's legacy with his four-volume publication *Geschiedenis der vaderlandsche schilderkunst*, published between 1816 and 1842.[14] That work aimed to succeed and update Houbraken's *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, which was published in three volumes between 1718 and 1721.[15] Adriaan Pz. van der Willigen (1810–1876), a Haarlem-based medical doctor and researcher, published a successor in 1866, titled *Geschiedkundige aanteekeningen over Haarlemsche schilders en andere beoefenaren van de beeldende kunsten*.[16] A French translation was published in Haarlem in 1870 – which serves to illustrate the French language's cultural dominance during that time when it came to books written on Dutch Old Masters.[17] It would not be until Gerrit Gratama (1874–1965),[18] the first director of the Frans Hals Museum, who took an interest in the work of Hals's sons,[19] that discussions about them reappeared in literature.[20] Explorations of Hals's sons would later reappear in the writings of the American Hals connoisseur Seymour Slive (1920–2014), starting in 1961,[21] and then within the writings of the German Hals connoisseur, Claus Grimm (1940), from 1971.[22]

13 Erftemeijer 2006, p. 16. Irene van Thiel-Stroman (1932–2021) graduated from the University of Amsterdam with a BA in art history. She began as a freelance researcher at the Frans Hals Museum in 1976 and remained working with the museum until the end of her career. Her research on Hals began for the 1989–90 Hals exhibition catalogue, and she herself, in a 2006 interview, stated that her contribution to that catalogue, 'The Frans Hals Documents: Written and Printed Sources, 1582–1679' (Van Thiel-Stromann 1989–90), is comparable to the earlier publication by W.L. Strauss and M. van der Meulen, *The Rembrandt Documents*, New York 1979. In the same interview, she notes that she was following in the footsteps of the Van der Willigens, as well as Abraham Bredius, in her archival research of Haarlem's artists, noting the importance of comparing their own notations to the original archival documents (for instance, in Haarlem), alongside three crucial documents in archival research on early modern lives: records of baptism, marriage, and death.

14 For an exhaustive and well written biography of Adriaan van der Willigen (1766–1841), the uncle of Adriaan Pz. van der Willigen, see Van der Heijden and Sanders 2010.

15 Houbraken 1718–21.

16 Van der Willigen 1866, pp. 3–8. It mentions Hals's brother Dirck, as well as Frans Hals's painter sons: Harmen, Frans II, Jan, Reynier, and Nicolaes. Van der Willigen innocuously declares 1584 to be the birth year of Hals in Mechelen (pp. 116–117).

17 Van der Willigen 1870.

18 For a biographical account of Gratama's life, the background on his family, and an overview of some of his major writings and scholarship on Hals and other painters, see Keuning and Bezold 2022.

19 Gratama 1930, pp. 8–9. About 25 paintings from the Frans Hals Museum's collection were cleaned in 1930, including a work by each of Hals's sons Johannes and Harmen, marking their first appearance in any of the annual reports authored by Gratama during his time as director of the Frans Hals Museum.

20 Cat. Exhib. Los Angeles 1947, pp. 173–200.

21 Slive 1961.

22 Grimm 1971. Serious discussion of Hals's children would not again reappear until the 2000s: Weller 2000; Ekkart 2012, p. 80. Ekkart 2012 briefly mentions Hals's sons in relation to Netherlandish family

Fig. 3. Anonymous, *Portrait of Abraham Bredius (1855–1946)*, 1905, gelatin silver print, 12 × 15.4 cm. The Hague, RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History, Collection Iconographic Bureau

The public and private machinations of late-nineteenth-century Hals connoisseurs – Bode, Hofstede de Groot, and Valentiner – with regard to Rembrandt, in the period from about 1870 to 1935, has been artfully traced by the American scholar of Dutch art Catherine Scallen. In her 2002 publication *Rembrandt, Reputation, and the Practice of Connoisseurship*, she introduces Abraham Bredius (1855–1946), former director of the Mauritshuis, to this grouping of connoisseurs (fig. 3).[23] He, along with the other aforementioned scholars, all formed a tightly knit group of museum directors, curators, and connoisseurs, all focused on Rembrandt as their primary painter of study.[24] However, they also all focused on Hals and his paintings – and this essay explores the lasting impact of these and other tertiary connoisseurs' work on Hals scholarship, and their involvement in perpetuating Thoré's connoisseurial legacy. Bredius, despite being overlooked as a key figure in Hals studies during the first half of the twentieth century, played a pivotal role in reconstructing much

dynasties of artists.

23 Scallen 2004, p. 23.

24 Van Gelder 1946, pp. 1–4.

of what was known about Hals's family and biography, up until the second half of the century. Throughout his career, Bredius tirelessly searched Dutch archives, which enabled him to publish numerous archival findings, particularly within *Oud Holland*, on aspects such as Hals's children.[25]

Within the first decades of the twentieth century, publishers began to produce general books on Hals and other celebrated painters (then as now) of Western art history; this led to a collective appreciation of these artists amongst the public. Such publications worked tangentially with exhibitions, gallerists, collectors, and museum-goers to create an increasing interest in the Old Masters and their work, in the USA and Europe. Exhibitions dedicated solely to work by Frans Hals shortly followed. Writing in the *New York Times* in 1909, Russel Sturgis summarized such books when reviewing a new work by Gerald S. Davies: 'It is a great thing to boast of, this constant succession of elaborately made intelligent books devoted to subjects of fine art which chase one another through the publishing world of London […]. The book on Frans Hals has been in a way described in the words above. There has been made a very sincere and direct investigation into the significance of the world of Frans Hals.'[26] Continuing, he states: 'Mr. Davies has evidently striven hard and devotedly to solve […] problems connected with [Hals's] unwritten biography, when written accounts of the admired painter fail him he can at all events follow the dating of the pictures and in a way write so much of the artist's life as the pictures themselves will explain. This is something, at least!' As this quote makes clear, details of Hals's biography remained scant before Bredius's archival work on the artist and his family.

Before delving into Grimm and Slive, it is important to note that Gratama is an overlooked Hals connoisseur (fig. 4). He was instrumental in establishing the Frans Hals Museum as the centre for research into Hals's paintings, their restoration, and general Hals knowledge: the museum's painting conservation studio is a legacy of his time as director. Under Gratama's directorship, the Frans Hals Museum underwent significant art historical professionalization following its opening in May of 1913. Initially lacking any climate control, electric lighting, and a curatorial team, the museum evolved under Gratama's leadership,[27] expanding its collection and contributing to the professionalization of art history through its exhibitions and research.[28] As a passionate art lover and a painter, Gratama played a crucial

25 Bredius 1888 (Jan); Bredius 1890, p. 12; Bredius 1909 (Herman); Bredius 1917; Bredius 1923/24, pp. 62 (Herman), 215 (Frans II), 258–262 (Reynier), and 263–264 (Jan).

26 Sturgis 1902, p. BR; Davies 1904.

27 The annual reports authored by Gratama during his time as director offer a wealth of materials related to the professionalization efforts that Gratama put in place at the Frans Hals Museum. See, for instance, regarding some of the problems of the humidity and heating in the 1910s, Gratama 1914, p. 4.

28 For an overview of the development of art history in the Netherlands, see P. Hecht 1998.

Fig. 4. Gerrit Gratama (1874–1964), *Self-portrait*, 1897. Canvas, 56.3 × 42.2 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum (inv. no. msch 83-6)

role in elevating the recognition of Hals and other Haarlem-based artists among the Dutch public in the early twentieth century. To explore this, one must delve into his extensive body of work, including scholarship, book reviews, exhibition catalogues, and correspondence.[29] Gratama oversaw the museum's eventual expansion;[30] was

29 For a brief overview of Gratama's biography as related to the Frans Hals Museum, see Erftemeijer 2013, pp. 66–76.

30 The floorplans, cross-sections, and elevation drawings for the Groot Heiligland renovation of the museum – before its opening in 1913 – details, for instance, the old and new layout, as well as the retaining of the main entry gate with its originally architectural ornament, showing how this was integrated into the newer portions of the exterior façade and newly created/reorganized interior spaces, can be studied on microfiches at the Noord-Hollands Archief. These drawings were submitted to the city of Haarlem, as part of the building permit application for the renovation of Oudemannenhuis. Haarlem, NHA, acc. no. 233, *Bouwvergunningendossiers* 2237, for instance nos. 52-1588 M, schetsontwerp verb. weeshuis tot Gemeentemuseum; 52-2400, 2401, schetsontwerpen, 1908; 52-2402, opmeting ged. Verdieping., c. 1908; 52-2322/2326, Geref. Weeshuis-Frans Halsmuseum, div. plannen 1910; 52-2403, schetsontwerp vb. tot museum, c. 1910; 52-2404, opmeting gevel Geref. Weeshuis, c. 1910; 52-2405, voor- en binnengevels, 1908.

the first to give prominence to the paintings of Frans Hals's sons at the museum;[31] and built a new gallery for Hals's civic guard pieces, in the 1930s.[32] Much of Slive and Grimm's work owes a debt to Gratama's 1937 Hals exhibition and his many publications on Hals's paintings, throughout his career.[33]

Next to Gratama, however, are other, what can be termed as *tertiary* scholars of Hals, who were also very much involved in the debates and publications that appeared on the artist during the first half of the twentieth century. The first was another Dutch scholar of German origin, Ernst Wilhelm Moes (1864–1912), who passed away from tuberculosis the year before the Frans Hals Museum opened in its new location at the Groot Heiligland. Moes's strength as a Hals connoisseur lies in the artist's biography, rather than in his paintings; methodologically, he was thus an antiquated connoisseur operating in the early twentieth century. Moes and Hofstede de Groot, in their lifetimes, wrote more about Hals's children and possible pupils than most Hals connoisseurs, but it was Moes who made Hals's life perspicuous to the general public. Moes was the director of the Print Room at the Rijksmuseum and a colleague of Bredius as one of the editors of *Oud Holland*, and he also published his own book on Hals in 1909, in French.[34] In Bredius's *In memoriam*, published in *Oud Holland* in 1913, he wrote of Moes: 'In his [book on Hals's life and work], he gave the first, almost complete work on that artist; and in its many pages, he speaks of his great admiration for the master, while the biography contains new, unknown peculiarities.'[35] Alongside Moes was a less prolific but equally erudite Hals

31 For a floorplan of the Frans Hals Museum, showing how Gratama displayed Hals's and the paintings of his sons, in the same room, see Köhler 2006, p. 49.

32 Haarlem, NHA, 476B1930 Bw. tentoonstellingszaal (Frans Halsmuseum), 1930. Concerning the need for extra space at the museum; 1927 is the first year in which Gratama begins to hint at the need for it. He states that is a shame that the 'skylight hall' can no longer be used for exhibitions and pronounces this as a reason for the museum being in need of its own exhibition hall; see Gratama 1927, p. 1. The new exhibition extension – today housing the civic guard pieces – was opened at the Frans Hals Museum on 2 April 1931, within which an exhibition of works by contemporary artists from Haarlem was on display; see Gratama 1931, p. 1.

33 White 2014; Feeney 2014.

34 Moes 1909, pp. 78–92. Moes discusses the work of Reynier, Nicolaes, Jan, and Fran Hals's brother Dirck; but he also mentions Pieter Gerritsz Roestraeten (1630–1700), as being present in Hals's studio, in connection with his marriage to Hals's daughter Adriaentgen. He repeated Houbraken's mentioning of Adriaen Brouwer (1605–1638), Adriaen van Ostade (1621–1649), and Dirck van Delen (1605–1671) as pupils in Hals's studio, notes that Vincent Laurensz van der Vinne (1628–1702) could have been a pupil of Hals, and questions if Philips Wouwerman (1619–1668), Jan Miense Molenaer (1610–1668), and Judith Leyster (1609–1660) were possible pupils of Hals. His remarks of a historiographical problem of identifying the possible pupils associated with Hals, which continued in the later twentieth century, and continues, today. See further: Bezold 2023, nn. 26–34.

35 Bredius 1913, p. 2.

scholar who was also active in the first half of the twentieth century – Numa S. Trivas (1899–1942), a Russia-born scholar and curator, who published his Hals catalogue in 1941.[36] He, like Valentiner, had emigrated to the USA and he became a curator at the Crocker Museum of Art in Sacramento. Unlike Valentiner, Trivas never became a museum director.

To briefly recount the main publications (often catalogues) on Hals since the 1880s – which therefore excludes the multivolume, non-Hals catalogue of Hofstede de Groot – they are listed here by date and language of publication: in 1883, Bode, in German;[37] in 1909, Moes, in French; in 1913, Gratama published a very handsomely produced book in German, Dutch, and English, on occasion of the museum's new location in the former Old Men's Alms House;[38] the 'Bode–Binder' catalogue was published in 1914, in English and German.[39] Next is Valentiner with his catalogues on Hals's work from 1921 and 1923,[40] both in German.[41] In 1935, Valentiner organized the first solo exhibition of Hals's paintings, with a catalogue in English.[42] He followed it up in 1936 with a book on Hals's works in the USA: *Frans Hals Paintings in America*.[43] The first Dutch Hals catalogue, to accompany a European solo exhibition on Hals,[44] was published in 1937 and authored by Gratama (fig. 5);[45] he authored another book on Hals (without an accompanying exhibition) in 1943.[46]

36 Trivas 1941. Trivas was the first Hals connoisseur to point out the flaws of the Hals connoisseurs who came before him, when he noted within his 1941 monographic study: photographs alone do not provide enough information with which to scientifically study paintings.

37 Von Bode 1883.

38 Gratama 1913.

39 Von Bode-Binder 1914 (English); Von Bode-Binder (German) 1914.

40 Unlike Bode, Valentiner had a profound interest in contemporary art, most notably German Expressionism, championing it as a museum director. For an overview of Valentiner's time as a museum director at the Detroit Museum of Arts, seen through the lens of medieval art and German Expressionism (his other major interests, next to Hals), and some of his influence on the display of sculpture in American art museums, see Mascolo 2016; Mascolo 2017; Darr 2021.

41 Valentiner 1921; Valentiner 1923. Valentiner had previously published his dissertation in 1904, entitled *Rembrandt und seine Umgebung* (Valentiner 1904).

42 Cat. Exhib. Detroit 1935.

43 Valentiner 1936.

44 For more information on the preparation for the exhibition and those involved, including Valentiner, see Gratama 1937, pp. 1–7.

45 Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 1937, p. 29: 'The exhibited works have been arranged as chronologically as possible according to the insight of Dr. W.R. Valentiner. The text has been kept as concise as possible; references are made to the most important literature. All paintings have been reproduced, giving the catalogue the character of a picture book and better preserving the memory of the exhibition.' The painter and art historian Jan L.A.A.M. van Rijckevorsel (1889–1949), pictured in fig. 5, helped compile the 1937 catalogue (ibid., p. 17).

46 Gratama 1943.

Fig. 5. Anonymous, Gerrit Gratama showing a painting to Jhr. dr. Jan L.A.A.M. van Rijckevorsel (1889–1949), painter and arthistorian, who helped compile the 1937 catalogue. To the right scientific assistant Carla van Hees (1905–?) and F. Brunt, who was involved in preparing the exhibition. Photo probably taken June 1937. Frans Hals Museum Archive

Valentiner staged another Hals exhibition in Los Angeles, in 1947, with an accompanying catalogue: *Loan Exhibition of Paintings by Frans Hals, Rembrandt*.[47] In 1962 Slive wrote the catalogue to accompany the third-ever solo Hals exhibition, held at the Frans Hals Museum, published in English and Dutch.[48] Grimm published his dissertation on Hals and his work in German in 1972.[49] Slive's first major catalogue raisonné on Hals appeared in three volumes between 1970 and 1974 – importantly, this was the first in English, making it globally accessible, once English had overtaken French as the world's *lingua franca* after World War II.[50] Another Hals publication appeared that same year in Italian, written by Grimm, which is under-cited and contains a catalogue.[51] Grimm published another in German in 1989, and Dutch and English in 1990, with forays into Hals's workshop.[52] The solo Hals exhibition

47 Cat. Exhib. Los Angeles 1947.
48 Cat. Exhib. Haarlem 1962.
49 Grimm 1972. For a review of the publication, see Ekkart 1973.
50 Slive 1970–74. For reviews of the publication, see Gerson 1973; De Jongh 1975; Broos 1978/79.
51 Grimm and Montagni 1974.
52 Grimm 1989; Grimm 1990 (Dutch); and Grimm (English) 1990.

catalogue, edited by Slive and with individual painting entries written by him, was also published in 1989 in a handsome volume that included many other new contributions by young Dutch scholars, curators, and researchers;[53] this was followed by his last full length-Hals book, in English, in autumn 2014, once more compiling other researchers' new findings, without footnotes.[54]

In his 2014 review of Slive's last publication on Frans Hals, Dennis P. Weller sums up what the differing opinions of Slive and Grimm, at that time, seemed to mean for Frans Hals studies:

> For readers familiar with the literature devoted to Frans Hals, it should come as no surprise that Claus Grimm eliminated all of the paintings of the fisher children from Hals's oeuvre. Rather inexplicably, however, and reversing the opinions of Slive and most scholars, Grimm also removed a number of small portraits on copper painted by Hals near the end of the 1620s. Such dramatically different visions of Hals's genius are noteworthy and timely, as they indicate the need to refocus scholarly interest back to Hals and his paintings.[55]

The so-called 'fisher children' are a group of paintings showing children, often holding baskets filled with fish, set against backgrounds of sand dunes, near to Haarlem; four were catalogued by Slive as by Hals, in 1974.[56] It should also be noted that such distinct groupings of paintings by genre or subject, and the study of them within such a framework, is rare within Hals studies due to his focus on portraiture; this is where new opportunities within future Hals studies await scholars.

The work of the Dutch Old Master connoisseurs Bredius, Bode, and Valentiner on Hals, is substantial but these days often lost in conversation about Hals's work due to the prominence of Slive and Grimm. When Valentiner published his dissertation in 1904, entitled *Rembrandt und seine Umgebung*, he quickly followed it up with a series of books, most in German and most about the paintings of Rembrandt. In 1906, Bode hired Valentiner as his personal assistant.[57] Of all Hals's connoisseurs, Valentiner had the least integrity when it came to 'stamping' his 'expertise' on 'rediscovered' paintings by Frans Hals, including work by his children, such as Jan.[58] In doing so he expanded conceptions of the artist in both popular imagination and art history, by enlarging the number of paintings 'attributable' to Hals. Entangled

53 Van Thiel-Stroman 1989–90.
54 Slive 2014.
55 Weller 2015, p. 107.
56 Stukenbrock 1993, pp. 245–246.
57 Scallen 2002, pp. 1–33 and 250.
58 Weller 2000. It is widely accepted by Hals scholars that of all Hals's sons who became artists, it was Jan who painted portraits in ways that were the most visually similar to his father's painted portraits.

in a web of Dutch and German painting connoisseurs then active mainly in The Hague, Amsterdam, and Berlin, Valentiner did not hesitate to encourage a steady flow of art from Europe to the USA in the first half of the twentieth century.[59] One could even say that Valentiner embodies the transference of Dutch Golden Age painting connoisseurship from Northern Europe to the USA, which happened during his lifetime.[60]

A Quest for Global Connoisseurship: Mid- to Late-Twentieth Century Collaboration

Gratama was another scholar who – in hindsight – helped pave the way for Slive and Grimm. When it came to preparing for the 1937 Hals exhibition, Gratama would travel to Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and France, as well as England. He was assisted in his efforts in the USA (concerning securing Halses there were in that country, to be exhibited in Haarlem) by Valentiner, then director of the Detroit Institute of Arts, was on the exhibition's 'committee of honour',[61] together with Hanns Schaeffer, of Schaeffer Gallery in New York. Thirty-six paintings from collections in the USA were exhibited in Haarlem; two were borrowed from the Swedish Royal Collection. It was thought at the time by Gratama that this grouping was a good overview – that is, 'complete' – of Hals's oeuvre: 'In putting together the exhibition, the aim was to give as complete a picture as possible of the oeuvre of Frans Hals' (fig. 6).[62] Gratama was also keenly aware of the importance of the 1937 Hals exhibition to art history itself:

> After several Dutch masters had been honoured in the Netherlands in previous years by an exhibition specially dedicated to them, including works by Jan Steen, Rembrandt, Jan Vermeer and Hieronymus Bosch, the present exhibition honoured Haarlem's greatest master, Frans Hals, in a worthy manner. Never before have so many of his works been brought together. It goes without saying that such an exhibition is of special historical art interest; in addition to a purely aesthetic

59 Weller 2017.

60 Liedtke 1990; Buijsen 1990.

61 Haarlem, NHA, 1374, inv. no. 92, letter to G. Gratama from W.R. Valentiner, 10 May 1937: 'I am delighted that you have had such success in securing other paintings from this country, and I wish to take this opportunity to tell you how pleased I am to be on the committee of honour. I am looking forward to seeing you during the summer. I hope to be in Haarlem some time during August.'

62 Gratama 1937, pp. 3–4. 'Bij de samenstelling der expositie werd beoogd een zoo volledig mogelijk beeld te geven van het oeuvre van Frans Hals.'

Fig. 6. Anonymous newspaper photograph: Gerrit Gratama (left) and Wilhelm Valentiner (right), looking at *Young Man in a Plumed Hat* at the Frans Hals exhibition, *Het Volk*, 13 July 1937

> pleasure, the exhibition offered important study material and thus contributed to the enrichment of knowledge about the oeuvre of Frans Hals.[63]

In total, 72,000 people visited the Haarlem exhibition, which ran from 1 July to 30 September 1937. The exhibition was the impetus for Maurits Michiel van Dantzig (1903–1960) – an artist, restorer, and connoisseur – to publish *Frans Hals: Echt of onecht,* in 1937, wherein he declares only 33 of the 115 exhibited works genuine Halses.[64] Not two years later, on 28 August 1939, Gratama's museum was closed by Haarlem's city council, due to simmering and increasingly clear indications that war would soon arrive in the Netherlands.[65] During November 1945, Gratama

63 Ibid., p. 6.

64 Van Dantzig 1937. On Hals connoisseurship, see also Tummers and Erdmann 2024, ch. 1, focusing on progressive and new collaborative technical research, particularly utilizing case studies, and outlining the modes and tools they have created and/or used to carry out the research.

65 Gratama 1939, p. 1.

curated his last exhibition, held from 23 November to 31 December, which celebrated Haarlem's 700th anniversary and was visited by 6,509 people.[66]

Heated debate on an 'accepted' Hals oeuvre began during the 1980s and the later decades of the twentieth century, following the 1962 exhibition in Haarlem, when Slive and Grimm's contrasting opinions on the subject accelerated the drive to establish such a consensus. 'Slive's' 1962 Hals exhibition in Haarlem, was held at the Frans Hals Museum, on the initiative of the museum's then director H.P. Baard (1906–2000) (fig. 7). The exhibition was also the impetus for Grimm's 1972 study on Hals, thus following in the tradition of Van Dantzig. As witnesses of the formal and informal discussions among the public and scholars on an 'accepted' Frans Hals oeuvre during the 1970s and the late twentieth century, behind the scenes, letters can be found in curatorial archives that were written by Slive and Grimm to the curators of many museums housing Halses, noting awareness of their duelling Hals attributions in their collections. This is the case for many of the curatorial files that accompany Hals's paintings in their respective museums.[67] During the research undertaken on Hals's paintings by the Frans Hals Museum during the 1989–90 solo Hals exhibition, only the third ever, the museum's researchers are quoted by A.R. Esman regarding the then-raging Slive–Grimm debates, in an article in *Art & Auction* from 1990:

> According to Dr. Pieter Biesboer, curator of the [Frans Hals] museum and a member of the investigative team [fig. 8], the researchers' aim is to amass factual information to augment or contest the existing theories that they consider subjective – including the conflicting views of Seymour Slive and Claus Grimm, the world's leading scholars [...]. The trouble with both of these opinions, Biesboer contends, is that they are just that: opinions based entirely on visual analysis, which he considers subjective. While he agrees that visual interpretations are vital in discussions of art, he feels that 'objective data' is no less essential [...]

66 Baard 1952, pp. 7–8, 10. 'As of January 1, 1946, Mr. G.D. Gratama resigned his position after having served as the director for 28 years, that is from 1 October 1912 to 1 January 1941, and then, at the request of the city council, after his retirement, having managed the museum for five more years as advisor to the city council. Under his leadership the museum flourished and became famous abroad. With special gratitude we recall the cleaning of the Frans Hals groups, which took place at a time when it must be considered as pioneering work. Some friends of the museum offered to it, a still life by his hand, upon the departure of Mr. Gratama, to be placed in the collection as a permanent reminder.'

67 See, for example: 'Letter by Seymour Slive attributing the Cincinnati Art Museum's *Head of a laughing boy* as a copy after the original by Frans Hals – 16 October', 16 October 1973, Curatorial files of painting inv. no. 1927.399, Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, OH; 'Letter by Claus Grimm, disputing Slive's attribution and assigning *Portrait of a Dutch family,* to Frans Hals II', 3 April 1985, Curatorial files of painting inv. no. 1927.399, Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, OH.

Met negentien „Halsen" uit Amerika

Links prof. Seymour Slive, rechts H. P. Baard, directeur van het Frans Halsmuseum in Haarlem.

Fig. 7. Anonymous newspaper photograph: Seymour Slive (left) and Henk Baard (right) at the Frans Hals exhibition, *Nieuwe Haarlemse Courant*, 4 June 1962

Overzichtstentoonstelling van Oude Nederlandse Meester

Frans Halsmuseum steekt z'n nek uit

HAARLEM – Tijdens de Haarlemse overzichtsexpositie van werken van Frans Hals doorbreekt het Frans Halsmuseum de gangbare en algemeen geaccepteerde chronologie waarin Hals zijn werken zou hebben vervaardigd. Het gaat slechts om twee werken, maar voor een juist begrip van wat de schilder daadwerkelijk zelf zou hebben geschilderd, is die tijdsvolgorde van groot belang. De actie van het museum is kunsthistorisch gezien 'behoorlijk gewaagd'.

Pieter Biesboer, conservator Oude Kunst van het Frans Halsmuseum heeft zijn nek uitgestoken en twee schilderijen, het Visersmeisje en de Visserjongen, een nieuwe datering gegeven. Tegenover de conservator zelf nu niet op glad ijs? „Ach, aan de ene kant wel, maar eigenlijk ook weer niet... Medio maart op het Frans Hals-symposium in Londen heb ik tenminste van vakgenoten mijn ideeën te horen gekregen. Ik heb toen veel bijval gehad. Dus wat dat betreft, nee, ik maak me niet ongerust."

● *Pieter Biesboer, conservator van het Frans Halsmuseum.*

Fig. 8. Anonymous newspaper photograph: Pieter Biesboer at the Frans Hals Museum, *Limburgs Dagblad*, 28 May 1990

> Conservator Ella Hendriks states that, 'the opinions of Slive and Grimm are judgments, whereas ours are purely scientific.'[68]

When Grimm's 1989 catalogue raisonné was published, few reviews followed; most reviewers instead chose the 1989–90 exhibition catalogue that Slive edited. This is however, to be expected. 'Slive's' catalogue had the institutional weight, and therefore the institutional authority – in all its forms – lent by the National Gallery, the Frans Hals Museum, and National Gallery of Art as host institutions.[69] The exhibition found its way to the Frans Hals Museum via a circuitous route. The idea for a new Hals exhibition was initiated by Slive, who at the outset sought collaboration with major galleries in Washington and London. As plans evolved, the Rijksmuseum and the Louvre were considered. Unexpectedly, the Frans Hals Museum in Haarlem was initially bypassed. Derk Snoep (1935–2005),[70] the museum's then director, leveraging local mandates, advocated for Haarlem as the primary venue, and not Amsterdam.[71] With the promise of lending significant works, including the famed civic guard and other group portraits, the museum transformed from an overlooked venue candidate into the nucleus of the exhibitions. In its accompanying catalogue, Slive included 86 paintings, 34 of which Grimm did not agree were attributable to Frans Hals. In his own 1989 catalogue raisonné, Grimm attributed only 145 works, decreasing his attribution count by 23 since his 1972 book on Hals (fig. 9). Within his 1974 catalogue, Slive had included 222 paintings, a number that is still often used in studies today. As is well known in Frans Hals studies, both Slive and Grimm approached their connoisseurship from the perspective of a visual, formalistic manner – a method no longer utilized by scholars today, who are now aided by advances in technical research and digital imaging.[72] Slive relied on his intuition, following the tradition of Bode, Hofstede de

68 Esman 1990.

69 Middelkoop 1990. 'The exhibition coordinated by Slive and the oppositional stance of his German counterpart, have placed the Frans Hals Museum in a state to take the clever initiative to untangle itself from Slive's monopoly on the Haarlem painter […] But it's not that simple. [People] realize that without the tenacity of Seymour Slive, and the clever positioning of the Frans Hals Museum, this gorgeous exhibition would have never taken place, in Haarlem.'

70 Siebenga 1990.

71 Private correspondence with Pieter Biesboer, 26 December 2023. Many thanks to Pieter Biesboer for the exchange.

72 Grimm 2023, 'Editor's Note', by Ellis Dullaart: 'As new possibilities and techniques for art-historical research and technical analysis have also developed since, it has now become time to revise the previous catalogues, according to the author, prof. dr. Claus Grimm […] The basis for [earlier] attributions was a stylistic analysis which assigned works either to Hals himself or to another master. However, this approach has been abandoned by now, since in many cases close comparison of small details reveals the involvement of multiple hands'.

DE TELEGRAAF

Ruzie experts tijdens perspresentatie tentoonstelling

HEIBEL OM HALS

door Thea Detiger

HAARLEM, donderdag

Het had zo'n mooi spektakel moeten worden tijdens de perspresentatie van de grote Frans Halstentoonstelling gisteren in Haarlem. Gewapend met een loep en een microscoop zouden de twee grote opponenten in het Hals-onderzoek, de Amerikaanse prof. dr. S. Slive en de Duitse prof. dr. C. Grimm, zich buigen over het omstreden doek De Regentessen en na een pittige discussie proberen tot een conclusie te komen: door Hals geschilderd of niet.

Prof. dr. S. Slive: „geen discussie met Grimm"

Doelwit

Fig. 9. Claus Grimm in front of Hals's *Regentesses*; photograph by Johannes Dalhuijsen, *De Telegraaf*, 10 May 1990

Groot, and Valentiner; Grimm's approach, meanwhile, was more methodical, yet still purely formal.[73] While the debates and the intricacies of the disagreements are most evident in their interpretations of Hals's surviving family portraits,[74] it is important not to overlook that their attributions to Hals are very much part of a long-standing tradition of lively connoisseurial scholarship on the artist, which can be traced back to Thoré-Burger and beyond.

Concerning the editorial framework that would eventually be used for the compilation of the catalogue for the 1989–90 Frans Hals exhibition, a rather interesting dynamic seems to have unfolded behind the scenes. Initially, Slive had intended to

73 Bezold 2015.

74 Bezold 2020. For an overview of debates around the fisher children, which still warrant further study, at dissertation level, see Weller 2022, pp. 78–113; Bezold 2023, n. 10. See also 'A Recent Riddle: The Story of the Fisherboys', in A. Tummers et al. 2024.

Fig. 10. Poppe de Boer (1941–2013), H.R.H. Princess Margriet, and Frans Hals Museum director Derk Snoep, with Seymour Slive in the background, at the Frans Hals Museum, 15 May 1990. Haarlem, Noord Hollands Archief, collectie Fotopersbureau De Boer, inv. no. 3276

essentially replicate the approach of his 1962 catalogue, repeating the exhibition with only slight changes. However, Snoep, then director of the Frans Hals Museum, negotiated on behalf of Dutch Hals scholars and researchers a more expansive editorial lens. Snoep advocated for integrating fresh research and perspectives on Hals, diverging from the previously trodden path that Slive had created on his own (fig. 10).[75] Irene van Thiel-Stroman, for instance, was enlisted for the exhibition catalogue to meticulously compile all the written and the printed sources about Hals and to summarize their contents, in the hope of eliminating persistent errors and confusions about his life by providing a practical chronology of events.[76] This shift not only imbued that Hals catalogue with kaleidoscopic views, but also marked a pivotal moment in the widening of the lens through which scholarship on Frans Hals was undertaken. The catalogue's compilation, therefore, demonstrates the then-evolving nature of art historical research, and the significance of embracing multiple authors in such scholarly endeavours.

75 Private correspondence with Pieter Biesboer, 26 December 2023.

76 In spite of this, errors, mostly concerning Hals's family, still persist; see, for instance, note 4 in this essay.

In his review of the 1989–90 Hals exhibition catalogue, Bob Haak noted:

> Slive does, it is true, meticulously record Grimm's view in the tiny letters of the 'Literature' of each entry, but in the text itself Grimm's name seldom appears, and where given his opinion, it is co-signed to the realm of footnotes [...] Is the gulf so deep as to preclude debate? It would appear so, for what Slive and the exhibition committee have done amounts to dismissing Grimm out of hand.[77]

Similar to the earlier Italian connoisseur who developed his own method for attributing paintings, Giovanni Morelli (1816–1891), and later, Van Dantzig, Grimm's own observations on Hals are, even today, less read than Slive's. Bode attempted to purge Morelli from art history due to what he perceived as Morelli's lack of art history credentials, since they did not match his own;[78] meanwhile, Van Dantzig's views concerning the Frans Hals exhibition of 1937 were often disregarded, except by Grimm.[79] So far, it seems that Slive has more firmly affixed his name to Hals's. In the same 1990 *Art & Auction* article, Biesboer concluded of the contentious Hals attribution debates that preceded the Frans Hals exhibition of 1989–90, both those between Slive and Grimm and between the museum's researchers themselves: 'Of course, there will always be disagreements. Hals is not here to tell us. Still, I think all of us agree that, in the end, it is the eye that decides.'[80] If the eye does decide, then formal analysis buttressed by new technical research may now lead toward more accurate attributions, holistically agreed upon by a collaborative effort.[81] Such an effort may involve culling insights from diverse Hals researchers, with much less focus on one scholar. This approach aligns with the current century's ethos of creating a new, technologically collective connoisseurship that elevates historical accuracy above any one personality.

Since Hals's 1989–90 exhibition, *Frans Hals*, several other Hals exhibitions have taken place. In 2011, Walter Liedtke (1945–2015) organized an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art titled *Frans Hals in the Metropolitan Museum*, showcasing the museum's collection of eleven Hals paintings.[82] During 2018 and 2019, the Toledo Museum of Art, the Royal Museums of Fine Arts in Brussels, and

77 Haak 1990–91.

78 Scallen 2004, pp. 32–33, 37–102.

79 Grimm 1972, p. 11; Grimm 1990 (English), p. 10.

80 Esman 1990.

81 The most extensive technical research conducted on paintings attributed to Hals (at least as considered as such), in 1989, which differentiates from that published in the 1989–90 catalogue and are incorporated into the 2014 Hals book by Slive, as well as the 2006 Frans Hals Museum collection catalogue *Painting in Haarlem* (Köhler 2006).

82 Liedtke 2011.

the Fondation Custodia in Paris presented an exhibition called *Frans Hals Portraits: A Family Reunion*, highlighting the known family portraits by Hals.[83] In 2021, the Dallas Museum of Art featured two portraits of Pieter Olycan, painted by Hals a decade apart, in an exhibition named *Frans Hals: Detecting a Decade*.[84] The Wallace Collection also held an exhibition entitled *Frans Hals: The Male Portraits*, which ran from late 2021 to early 2022.[85] Finally, in September 2023, the National Gallery in London opened an exhibition on Frans Hals, which is also the first full-scale solo Frans Hals exhibition of this century. The exhibition closed on 21 January 2024, and was accompanied by publications in English and Dutch that include seven essays on subjects ranging from Hals's biography to the rendering of laughter in his work.[86] The publication – which is not quite a catalogue, as it lacks individual entries – accompanies the London and Amsterdam iterations of the exhibition. One cannot help but brush against the thought that a catalogue with similar editorial organization to that of 1989–90 – rivalling or surpassing it in ambition, and certainly including individual entries on exhibited paintings – would have been welcomed. The exhibition itself was certainly oriented toward the serious scholar and connoisseur, given the limited appeal of such a show to the broad public, according to harsh reviews in the UK press.[87] The Rijksmuseum's iteration, staged from February to June 2024, was a prelude to Berlin's Gemäldegalerie version, which included work by pupils and followers.[88] That version, accompanied by a catalogue with entries, took place from 12 July to 3 November 2024.

Shifting Paradigms in Hals Connoisseurship: From Print to Pixel

Every century has seen its own technologies that have enabled connoisseurs to flourish within the milieu in which they practised. The scholars of the seventeenth century had access to the printing press; those of the eighteenth had access to the prior century's archives; those of the nineteenth century saw the invention of photography, the introduction of train travel, and the standardization of the catalogue raisonné. At the same time, the incubation of art museums enabled oil painting connoisseurs to emerge, whose life was also their work, and whose museum positions – such as of Bode and Bredius – emboldened their authority and status,

83 Nichols, De Belie, and Biesboer 2018. The book was also published in Dutch and French.

84 The exhibition did not have an accompanying publication, though there was a website produced for the exhibition that offered a virtual and audio tour: https://virtual.dma.org/frans-hals/

85 Packer and Roy 2021. For a review of the book, see Bezold 2022.

86 Cornelis et al. 2023.

87 Jones 2023.

88 Cat. Exhib Berlin 2024. See note 34.

as such. Later, the twentieth century saw the invention of the car, airplane, and computer, while the twenty-first century has, so far, seen the rise of the computer's importance in aiding painting connoisseurs, for instance with high-resolution imagery and screens, ready access to the internet, and the abundance of instant information that can be accessed through it. What is lost today concerning the art of Old Master painting connoisseurship are the healthy debates in print regarding conflicting opinions; the boldness of such authors in print, as we saw between Bredius and Bode; and the lethargically slow pace with which their rather fierce print exchanges took place.[89] Instead of the lengthy pauses between these publicly occurring attribution debates in print, practising connoisseurs now benefit from instantaneous communication granted by the internet, as the rapid publishing of their research results. However, today's quick, digital communication also comes at the expense of public debates around attributions of the paintings in question, which were formerly in print, for the consumption of the general public and Hals specialists. Thus, communication among Hals connoisseurs and curators is now more precise, and yet this increase in speed comes at the expense of such debates having become more private.

Perhaps, then, there will never be a singular Hals connoisseur in the future, just as – as has now been revealed – there was never truly only one major Hals connoisseur in the past. Grimm, the preeminent Hals connoisseur and the only one still authoring comprehensive catalogues raisonnés of Hals's paintings, presented his third, digital catalogue raisonné on 4 July 2024, published by the RKD, full of fresh reassessments of Hals's painting, based on years of analysis.[90] It is the first to include extensive indexes of copies and drawings after Hals's paintings.[91] From the turn of the twenty-first century, a group of Frans Hals scholars collectively studied paintings 'by Hals' that appear on the market. Though it has been inactive for some time, it was established on the initiative of Old Master painting restorer Martin Bijl and included Pieter Biesboer, Norbert Middelkoop, and Claus Grimm. Despite this clustering of contemporary Hals expertise, the broader works of the Hals family, including Hals's children, remain less explored, leaving a gap in the appreciation of their collective oeuvre. Hals's fluctuating popularity among

89 Perhaps the last of such debates that occurred in print, regarding the authenticity of a work by a Dutch Old Master, is that which occurred regarding a 'Rembrandt' in the Mauritshuis's collection, and 'another' in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg: Buijsen 2001; Sluijter 2001.

90 Grimm 2024. The first section of the catalogue, containing an overview of Hals's life and workshop and pupils, was published on 20 December 2023; see Grimm 2023.

91 Ibid., 'Editor's Note', by Ellis Dullaart: 'Thanks to new insights gained by technical research, as well as new possibilities for comparing and analyzing works of art in minute detail – using high-resolution digital photographs – the author now distinguishes which paintings, or which parts of them, were executed by Hals himself and which were done by studio assistants.'

seventeenth-century Dutch art collectors directly influences the market value of his works and, by extension, those of his family members – who, unlike Hals, also produced drawings in addition to paintings.[92] The potential discovery of a Frans Hals drawing could reshape the understanding of Hals's paintings, and therefore their market evaluations, affecting not just Hals's paintings but also those of his immediate and extended family in both private and public collections. This complex interplay of art historical research, methodologies, shifting reputations of experts, market trends, and the evolving appreciation of Hals and his family's art, continues to shape our understanding and valuation of their contributions to the art world.

If connoisseurship was ever practiced at the level of craft, it was during the last few decades of the eighteenth century, and first few of the twentieth – certainly as far as Hals studies are concerned. The term 'craft' in this context reflects the transformation of connoisseurship into an art form in itself, in which practitioners combined scholarly insight with the precision and creativity typical of skilled artisans. These connoisseurs approached artworks with a potent blend of deliberate, thorough, and dynamic analysis, marking a notable contrast to the more modern techniques of their early twenty-first-century counterparts and underscoring the evolving nature of art connoisseurship over the years. Hals's early connoisseurs lived in an age lost to our own. It is therefore the *slowness*, *defensiveness*, and *liveliness* that characterizes Hals's late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century connoisseurs, advancing and defending their opinions, which differentiates their methods from those of the first few decades of the twenty-first century. When viewed from the vantage point of the 1800s, the seventeenth century would have felt much closer to the era of the Burgundian Netherlands than it appears to us today. Similarly, when Bredius published his first article on the art of Hals in 1879, the span of 213 years since Hals's passing would not have seemed as distant then as it might to contemporary eyes.[93] The past – the seventeenth century – as early Hals connoisseurs experienced it in their research, was much closer in time to them than it is to us today. The smaller span of time between their lifetimes, and objects of their study – seventeenth-century paintings – is what partially defined their methodologies. Though researchers of seventeenth-century material culture today have gained new technology, we have lost the sense of connection with the seventeenth century itself. More than 350 years separates today's researchers from Frans Hals's death in 1666.

While the latest exhibitions, connoisseurs, catalogues, and clusters of books traced in this essay have undoubtedly enriched today's understanding of Frans

92 Schatborn 1973. If Frans Hals drew, the attribution of a drawing and/or sketch to him has yet to be published by any scholars of Hals.

93 Calmette 2001; Bredius 1879.

Fig. 11. Harry Pot (1929–1996), *Portrait of Gerrit Gratama on the Occasion of his 90th Birthday*, 16 March 1964. The Hague, National Archives (inv. no. 916-1811)

Hals's work, Gerrit Gratama's role in Hals studies during the early twentieth century should not be overlooked. Gratama, and his public-facing work on Frans Hals – such as his 1937 exhibition,[94] and his plethora of publications, both on Hals and many other Haarlem artists – is crucial to linking the work of the earlier, mid- and late-nineteenth-century Hals connoisseurs to those of the mid- to late twentieth century (fig. 11). As is now clear, Gerrit Gratama helped shape the foundations of Hals studies for later – and ultimately, contemporary – Hals research. As current scholars continue their work, it is hoped that Gratama's significant contributions will be recognized and given prominence within future studies about Hals.

About the author

John Bezold is an American-Dutch editor, researcher, writer, and journalist.

94 An elaborate history and analysis of the 1937 Hals exhibition, curated by Gratama, forms a chapter of my dissertation on him, and his impact on Hals scholarship, and fluctuating market valuation of Hals's paintings.

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Frans Hals (1582/83-1666) is rightfully considered one of the most important Dutch painters of the seventeenth century. His portraits are admired for their virtuoso brushwork and their seemingly spontaneous character. This volume, with fourteen contributions by twenty-six specialists on Hals's paintings and his artistic network in Haarlem and beyond, presents a rich palette of new research.

The authors introduce subjects such as the artist's clientele – from clergymen and fellow painters to governors of charitable institutions – as well as stylistic and technical aspects of individual paintings. The results of recent restorations are discussed, along with how advanced digital technologies contribute to our understanding of the painter's style and artistic development. A final section is dedicated to the rediscovery of Frans Hals in the second half of the nineteenth century and to the subsequent art historical debate among connoisseurs about the artist's oeuvre.

Frans Hals: Iconography – Technique – Reputation is the first volume in the Frans Hals Studies book series and is richly illustrated with close to two hundred colour illustrations.

Norbert E. Middelkoop is the senior curator of paintings, prints and drawings at the Amsterdam Museum and the former curator of old masters at the Frans Hals Museum.

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