



SALOMON LILIAN

DUTCH OLD MASTER PAINTINGS

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cat. no.

- 1 Frans Francken the Younger
- 2 Frans Hals
- 3 Jacques Jordaens
- 4 Judith Leyster
- 5 Jan Havicksz Steen
- 6 Swabian School
- 7 Jan van de Velde III

cat. no. 1

Frans Francken the Younger

1581 – Antwerp – 1642

Esther before Ahasuerus

Signed and dated lower left: D f francken [inv.] et f. Antw / A° 1622

Oil on panel

75.2 x 112.7 cm.

Provenance:

London, collection Edmund Larken, Esq (1766-1831)

His sale, London, Christie's, 16-17 June 1831 (Lugt no. 12697), lot 91 (17 June):

'Old Francks : Esther and Ahasuerus, 1622', 6 Pounds, to Ewart

Belgium, private collection, until 2006

Sale Amsterdam, Sotheby's, 9 May 2006, lot 11

London, Johnny van Haften, Ltd., 2006

New York, The Leiden Collection, until 2023

Literature:

Possibly E. Duverger, *Antwerpse kunstinventarissen uit de zeventiende eeuw*, 14 vols., Antwerp 1984-2009, 3 (1987), p. 156 (doc. 670: 1629); 6 (1992), pp. 39 (doc. 1580: 1649), 267 (doc. 1745: 1652), 296 (doc. 1769: 1652)

L.S. Lerner, 'Les « fils » d'Esther : À la recherche du temps perdu comme micro-littérature', in: *MLN* 133/4 (French Issue, September 2018), pp. 831-857, pp. 849-850, fig. 5

The Power of Women

Esther before Ahasuerus

Frans Francken the Younger's 1622 *Esther before Ahasuerus* couples ambition, monumentality and brilliant execution with timeless narrative relevance. First surfacing in 2006, the painting has until now largely escaped scholarly attention, and has never been contextualised within Francken's output. Depicted is the Old Testament story of Queen Esther kneeling before her husband Ahasuerus, king of Persia. As recounted in the Book of Esther, Ahasuerus' first wife, the beautiful queen Vashti was, on the advice of the king's councillors, banished

for disobeying her husband's order of appearing before him wearing the royal crown during a lavish feast. With Vashti gone, a beauty pageant was held and Esther, a young Jewish woman, was chosen as the new queen. Esther's Jewish identity, however, remained unknown to Ahasuerus and his court, only her uncle and guardian Mordechai knew. One day Mordechai overheard an assassination plot against the king. He informed Esther and instructed her to tell her husband, which she did, thus thwarting the conspiracy. Soon after Ahasuerus appointed Haman as grand vizier, ordering everyone to bow down to him. Mordechai, however, refused to bow to Haman, on account of his Jewish faith. This enraged the haughty



grand vizier so, that he decided to have Mordechai and all the Jews in Persia killed, slandering them, and fabricating lies, thus convincing his king to permit him to execute his heinous plans. Hearing all this, Mordechai urged Esther to reveal to her husband her own Jewishness, and Haman's genocidal plot. Although hesitant – going to the king without being summoned meant risking her life – she agreed.

This heroic and crucially important royal audience is depicted by Frans Francken. Seated on his throne in a palace interior, Ahasuerus grants his beloved Esther her say, pointing his sceptre at her as she kneels with her maidens in front of her husband, with Haman standing beside him and his councillors looking on. Francken truly wore himself out in the lifelike depiction of his protagonists and the individual courtiers, the meticulously rendering of the colourful, luxurious fabrics of their clothing – Haman's robe is even painted with gold, no doubt referencing his conceit – pillows and luxurious tapestries, and the lifelike depiction of the dogs, and monkeys in the foreground. By deploying her natural grace and eloquence, Esther gets her king not only to listen to her but is able to arrange for a dinner – and then another – at which she finally reveals her identity, and exposes Haman's evil intent. Thus, the Jewish people are delivered,



Fig. 1 Philips Galle after Maerten van Heemskerck, *Esther Before Ahasuerus*, 1564, engraving, 20.5 x 24.8 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (image reversed)

and Haman ends up being hung from the very gallows he himself erected for Mordechai. In turn, Mordechai is rewarded with Haman's position for his role in thwarting the conspiracy against the king, and is being paraded around the city on horseback, wearing royal robes and a crown, a scene depicted in the left background.

Solomon's Idolatry

For his composition, Francken could draw on a well-established pictorial tradition from which he did not deviate significantly (fig. 1). Rather, the painting's exceptionality lies in its spectacular grandeur and magnificent execution. Adding, moreover, another dimension to our understanding of it is another work of near-identical measurements, painted by Francken in the same year 1622, equally ambitious and showcasing – while depicting a different Biblical narrative – a strikingly similar composition. This painting, *Solomon's Idolatry*, now in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu (fig. 2), shares with the Lilian work so many characteristics, that one cannot but wonder about the extent of a shared, interconnected genesis.¹ The Getty painting depicts the story of Solomon, the wise king of Israel, as recorded in 1 Kings 11. Against the explicit wishes of the Lord, Solomon in later life loved many foreign women. He had 700 princess wives and 300 mistresses who with their seductive powers turned his affections away from the Lord, and toward other gods. Solomon even constructed an altar dedicated to Chemosh 'that detestable Moabite idol, and to Molech, the detestable Ammonite idol. Solomon did this for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their own gods.' (1 Kings 11: 7-9). The scene is situated in nearly the identical architectural setting found in the Lilian work and follows the same compositional build-up. It likewise shows the protagonist with stretched hands and wearing a lush mantle, facing left while kneeling centre stage on a luxurious exotic carpet, here witnessed not by a row of male advisors behind him, but by a row of his wives and concubines, and including the near-identical *repoussoir* figure – Haman in the Lilian work, a courtier in the Getty painting – in the left foreground.



Fig. 2 Frans Francken the Younger, *Solomon's Idolatry*, signed on the pedestal: f. franck in cf A / 1622, oil on panel, 77.2 x 109.9 cm., Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum

Gender, Virtue and Vice

Do these arresting analogies imply an added relation between the stories of Esther and Solomon: is there reciprocity between them beyond their compelling visual alignment? Both stories take place in periods and lands far removed from one another in time and place, so a potential connection should not be sought in historical or geographical proximity, but rather in narrative similarities – or contrasts. Recapitulating, it turns out that the connections are certainly there, and that they centre around oppositions of gender, virtue and vice: whereas in the Lilian painting the heroine Esther kneels before her husband the king and a row of entirely male advisors, the group in front of which Solomon kneels in the Getty work consists exclusively of females, Solomon's wives and concubines, who have lured their king away from the Lord. Both paintings thus entertain the notion

of female exercise of power, in opposite but visually strongly corresponding ways. While the story of Solomon's idolatry centres on the negative influence that the king's wives and concubines bear on his decision-making, in the case of the virtuous Esther the narrative concentrates on the positive difference made by a single woman, who through wisdom, courage and careful navigation prevents her misled king from making a fatal decision, therewith saving herself and her people.²

In both paintings, these core negative and positive implications of feminine power over a man are further exemplified by female allegorical statues in niches in the centre background, prominently presiding over the events taking place (figs. 3, 4). In the Getty painting the statue carries a book and a mask, in the Lilian work the statue holds a shield

and a 'caduceus' (snake staff).³ While in both cases the specific combination of attributes remains ambiguous to an extent, the Getty statue's mask is an irrefutable reference to deceit, traditionally encountered with allegorical personifications such as Fraus (Treachery), Inganno (Deception), Seductio (Temptation) and Mendacium (Lie).⁴ As for the Lilian statue, she can tentatively be identified as 'Hermathena', a composite merging Minerva (Athena, with her shield) and Mercury (Hermes, with his caduceus), that shares several of these sibling gods' specific qualities.⁵ Hermathena was known for learning and eloquence, clever intelligence, ruse and winning strategy in life, as is underlined by an engraving after Hans von Aachen (1552-1615), which shows Hermathena representing the concept of *Cursus*, or career (fig. 5). Moreover, according to Ripa, Eloquence ('Eloquenza') – Esther's quality *par excellence* – is represented by the parrot ('the parrot is an attribute of Eloquence, for she does great wonder with tongue and speech, mimicking therein Man'), not coincidentally the bird sitting on the ledge of the niche.⁶

Were, then, these two corresponding paintings conceived as pendants? So far, no archival evidence for that assumption has surfaced. Still, the observations laid out here clearly indicate that they were thought out as a unit, if not as pendants, then certainly as 'sister paintings'.

JH



Fig. 3 Detail of fig. 2, background statue



Fig. 4 Detail of cat. no. 1, background statue



Fig. 5 Aegidius Sadeler after Hans von Aachen, *Hermathena / Cursus*, engraving, 39.8 x 29.6 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Notes

- 1 For this painting, see: U Härting, *Frans Francken der Jüngere (1581-1642) : die Gemälde : mit kritischem Oeuvrekatalog*, Freren 1989, pp. 57, 246, cat. no. 74, fig. 55.
- 2 On the theme of the Power of Women in early modern art, see before all Y. Bleyerveld, *Hoe bedriechlijk dat die vrouwen zijn : vrouwenlisten in de beeldende kunst in de Nederlanden circa 1350-1650*, Leiden 2000. While the Esther story here serves to exemplify female virtue, such positive examples remained significantly less common in sixteenth and seventeenth century art and literature than negative examples of female vice. Time and again contemporaneous notions on feminine nature prove to be overwhelmingly unfavourable, misogynist. The deceptive wives of biblical, mythological, and historical women – a.o. Eva, Bathsheba, Delilah, Phyllis, and many more unnamed – continuously served to warn against the destructive powers of women in general. Motivated by lust, foolishness, credulousness, financial gain or revenge, and invariably using sex and/or alcohol as their *modus operandi*, these seductive women cunningly brought down even the best of men, the wise king Solomon being a perfect example.
- 3 I thank Yvonne Blyerveld for our discussion on the possible meaning of these statues. Email, July 2023.
- 4 See C. Ripa (D.P. Pers, transl.), *Cesare Ripa's Iconologia of Uytbeeldinghen des Verstants*, Amsterdam 1644, pp. 29-30 (*Fraus* and *Inganno*, depicted with a mask); see also numerous prints, in which female personifications of these concepts invariably carry masks.
- 5 The shield held by the Lilian statue might also reference the female personification of Veritas (Truth), who is sometimes depicted holding up a shield to protect Humanity from vices such as Hypocrisy, Ignorantia and Mendacium (Lie). Cf. Dirck Volckertsz Coornhert's print after Adriaen de Weerdt, *Truth Protects the Believer against all Evil*, of c. 1570. See: I.M. Veldman, *De wereld tussen goed en kwaad : late prenten van Coornhert*, exh. cat. Gouda, Stedelijk Museum Het Catharina Gasthuis 1990, pp. 102-103, ill. The print is part of a series in which the negative personifications of Mendacium (Lie) and Seductio (Seduction) are depicted several times with masks as their attribute.
- 6 Ripa/Pers 1644, pp. 594-598, esp. pp. 595, 597. Interestingly, Ripa's female personification of 'Forza sottoposta al' Eloquenza' ('Violence overcome by Eloquence'), so fitting to the Esther narrative, also carries a caduceus.

Frans Hals

Antwerp 1582/83 – 1666 Haarlem

Portrait of a Man, Half-Length in Black, Wearing a Broad-Brimmed Black Hat and a White Ruff, Holding his Gloves in his Left Hand, within a Feigned Oval

Signed and dated: AETAT SVAE 50 / AN° 1635 / FH

Oil on canvas

87.5 x 68.5 cm.

Provenance:

Sale Amsterdam, Philippus van der Schley et al., 21 June 1797, lot 90 (with pendant, lot 91, together to Amman for fl. 20)¹

Leipzig, collection Johann Caspar Lampe (1766-1817) (with pendant)

His sale, Leipzig, 17 May 1819, lot 35 (with pendant, lot 36)²

Kassel, Akademie (with pendant)³

Vienna, collection Josef, Ritter Lippmann von Lissingen (1827-1900), by 1872 (with pendant)

His sale, Paris, Drouot (Pillet/Féral), 16 March 1876, lot 21, for fr. 12,100 (with pendant, lot 22)

Antwerp, collection Édouard Kums (1811-1891), 1883 (with pendant)⁴

Paris, Charles Sedelmeyer, before/in 1898

Paris, collection Maurice Kann (1839-1906), before/in 1898

Paris / New York, F. Kleinberger Galleries, 1911

New York, art trade Scott & Fowles, by 1914⁵

Sale New York, American Art Association (Fowles Estate), 17 January 1922, lot 16

New York, collection Lionel F. Straus

Sale New York, Parke-Bernet Galleries (Straus Estate), 11 March 1953, lot 9, where acquired by

New York, Nicholas M. Acquavella Galleries⁶, from whom acquired by

New York (?), collection Mr and Mrs John J. Hyland⁷

Thence by descent to the previous owners

Literature:

F. Lippmann et al., *Katalog der Gemälde alter Meister aus dem Wiener Privatbesitze*, exh. cat. Vienna, K.K. Österreichischen Museum 1873, p. 41, cat. no. 158

W. Unger, C. Vosmaer, *Etsen naar Frans Hals door Prof. William Unger : met eene verhandeling over den schilder door Mr. C. Vosmaer*, Leiden 1872/73, no. 14, ill., as Frans Hals⁸

W. Unger, *Frans Hals. Dix eaux-fortes par Prof. William Unger*, 2 vols., Leiden c. 1875, no. 14, ill., as Frans Hals⁹

W. von Bode, *Studien zur Geschichte der holländischen Malerei*, Braunschweig 1883, p. 83, cat. no. 38, as Frans Hals

Illustrated Catalogue of 300 Paintings by Old Masters... being some of the principal



pictures which have at various times formed part of the Sedelmeyer Gallery, Paris 1898, pp. 62-63, cat. no. 49, ill., as Frans Hals
 G. Hulin, in: *Inventaire archéologique de Gand : catalogue descriptif et illustré des monuments, oeuvres d'art et documents antérieurs à 1830* 18 (1900), p. 174, as Frans Hals
 E.W. Moes, *Frans Hals : sa vie et son oeuvre*, Brussels 1909, p. 105, cat. no. 95, as Frans Hals
 C. Hofstede de Groot, *Beschreibendes und kritisches Verzeichnis der Werke der hervorragendsten holländischen Maler des XVII. Jahrhunderts*, 10 vols., Esslingen 1907-1928, 3 (1910), p. 86, cat. no. 304, as Frans Hals (English ed., London 1910, p. 87, cat. no. 304, with erroneous provenance; corrected vol. 4, London 1912, pp. vii-viii ('Translator's note'), cat. no. 304)
 A. Dayot, *Exposition des grands et petits maitres Hollandais du XVIIe siècle*, exh. cat. Paris, Salle du Jeu de Paume 1911, p. 12, cat. no. 6, as Frans Hals
A descriptive and illustrated catalogue of 150 paintings by old masters of the Dutch, Flemish, German, Italian, Spanish and French schools from the Kleinberger Galleries, Paris/New York 1911, pp. 40-41, cat. no. 28, ill., as Frans Hals
 A. Dayot, *Grands et petits maîtres hollandais du XVIIe siècle à l'exposition à Paris* 1911, Paris 1912, opp. p. 76, ill., p. 128, cat. no. 62, as Frans Hals
 W. von Bode, M.J. Binder, *Frans Hals : sein Leben und seine Werke*, 2 vols., Berlin 1914, 1, p. 42, cat. no. 155, pl. 93a, as Frans Hals
 W.R. Valentiner, *Frans Hals: des Meisters Gemälde in 318 Abbildungen (Klassiker der Kunst 28)*, Stuttgart/Berlin 1921, pp. 137, 315, ill., as Frans Hals (2nd, ed. 1923, pp. 150, 316, ill.)
 F. Dülberg, *Frans Hals : ein Leben und ein Werk*, Stuttgart 1930, pp. 142, 144, 223, as Frans Hals
 W.R. Valentiner, *Frans Hals Paintings in America*, Westport 1936, cat. no. 55, ill., as Frans Hals
 P. Eeckhout, G. Chabot, *Meesterwerken uit het Museum voor Schone Kunsten te Gent*, Brussels 1949, p. 16, under cat. no. 22, as Frans Hals
 E. Trautscholdt, 'Zur Geschichte des Leipziger Sammelwesens', in: *Festschrift Hans Vollmer*, Leipzig 1957, pp. 217-252, pp. 229, 238, fig. 17, as Frans Hals
 M. Berthe (ed.), *Roem der Belgische gemeenten*, exh. cat. Brussels, Paleis voor Schone Kunsten 1960, p. 116, under cat. no. 262, as Frans Hals
 S. Slive, in: H.P. Baard, S. Slive, *Frans Hals : exhibition on the occasion of the centenary of the Municipal Museum, Frans Hals Museum at Haarlem, 1862-1962*, exh. cat. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum 1962, pp. 59-60, under cat. no. 46, doubtful attribution to Frans Hals
 J. Duverger, R.L. Delevoy, *Acht eeuwen schilderkunst : schatten uit de Belgische Musea*, Brussels 1969, p. 338, under cat. no. 736, as Frans Hals
 C. Grimm, *Frans Hals : Entwicklung – Werkanalyse – Gesamtkatalog*, Berlin 1972, pp. 94, 202, cat. no. A 22, as after Frans Hals
 S. Slive, *Frans Hals*, 3 vols., London 1970-1974, 3 (1974), p. 147, cat. no. D. 53, fig. 174, p. 72, under cat. no. 136, as follower of Frans Hals
 E.C. Montagni, *L'opera completa di Frans Hals*, Turin 1974, pp. 98-99, cat. no. 104, fig. 104a, as Frans Hals (citing Slive's opinion)

C. Grimm, *Frans Hals : das Gesamtwerk*, Stuttgart/Zürich/Belser 1989, pp. 54-55, fig. 92, p. 292, cat. no. K 15, as after Hals
C. Grimm, *Frans Hals* (catalogue raisonné in preparation), no. A1-72, as Frans Hals

Exhibited:

Vienna, Kaiserlich-Königliches Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie, 1873, no. 158
Paris, Jeu de Paume, 1911, no. 61

Frans Hals

Frans Franchoisz Hals was arguably the greatest portraitist of the Dutch seventeenth century.¹⁰ Born in Antwerp c. 1582/83 as the son of the cloth-dresser Franchois Fransz Hals (c. 1542- in or before 1610) and his second wife Ariaentje van Geertenryck (c. 1552-1616), he and his family emigrated to Haarlem in the North before July 1586, when he was still a toddler. Hals – together with his younger brother Dirck Hals (1591-1656), who likewise became a painter of renown – thus grew up in Haarlem, a city that 400 years later is still synonymous with his name. It is not entirely clear where Hals received his education. Karel van Mander's (1548-1606) anonymous biographer states that Hals was his pupil, but Van Mander himself curiously fails to mention Hals in his *Schilder-Boeck*. We first hear of Hals in 1610, when he became a member of the Haarlem Guild of St Luke. Around the same time Hals married his first wife, Anneke Harmensdr, with whom he would have three children. The marriage was short-lived. In 1615 Anneke was buried. Two of their three children died in 1613 and 1616, only their son Harmen Hals reached maturity and became a painter like his father. In 1616 Hals travelled to his birthplace Antwerp for some months, where he no doubt witnessed the artistic boom around Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) *cum suis*. In 1617, back in Haarlem, Hals married Lysbeth Reyniersdr (1593-1675), with whom he would have eleven children, four of them becoming painters: Frans the Younger, Reynier, Claes and Jan. Their daughter Sara spent time in the workhouse for fornication, their son Pieter was mentally challenged and was likewise confined to the workhouse.

Throughout his life, Hals and his family lived in rental houses in the center of Haarlem. Hals evidently had perpetual money problems, as is evidenced from documents concerning debts. Still, as a painter he was broadly recognized. In 1628 Samuel Ampzing in his *Beschryvinghe ende Lof der stad Haerlem* wrote a lauding poem on the Hals brothers: 'Come, Halses, come forth! / Take here a seat, which is yours by right. / How dashingly Frans paints the people from life! / How neat the little figures Dirck gives us! / Brothers in art, brothers in blood. / Nurtured by the same love of art and mother.' In addition to his own sons, Hals had various pupils, many of them renowned themselves: Judith Leyster (1609-1660), Adriaen van Ostade (1610-1685), Adriaen Brouwer (1603/05-1638) and Philips Wouwerman (1619-1668) all studied with him.

Frans Hals is mostly famous for his phenomenally vibrant brushwork – his 'signature style' as the art historian Chris Atkins labelled it¹¹ – or 'het kennelijcke van den meester' as Arnold Houbraken (1660-1719) remarked, a style uniquely his, which set him apart from his contemporaries. It made him the absolute idol of the impressionist painters of the nineteenth century, such as Édouard Manet (1832-1883), James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), Claude Monet (1840-1926), Mary Cassatt (1840-1926), Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) and John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) who all made the pilgrimage to Haarlem to see Hals' works in their natural habitat. Hals mainly painted portraits and group portraits, but during the 1620s and 1630s also ventured into genre busts of children, stage characters and colorful

Haarlem common folks. The last years of his life he received a life pension from the city of Haarlem of 200 guilders per year, three cartloads of peat, and his rent was paid for him. He died in August 1666, and was buried on 1 September of that year in Haarlem's St Bavo Church.

The Lilian portrait – Amsterdam, Vienna, Antwerp, Paris, New York, London

In 1872 the German engraver and etcher William Unger (1837-1932) published his *Etsen naar Frans Hals*, an ambitious series of twenty etchings after masterpieces by Frans Hals, neatly presented in a folio format book, and accompanied by an essay on the Haarlem master by Dutch poet and art critic Carel Vosmaer (1826-1888). The publication was made available both in Dutch and in French, thus intently appealing to an international public. Among the famous militia pieces and group portraits from Haarlem, the *Merry Drinker*, the *Portrait of Isaac Massa and Beatrix van der Laen* (then thought to depict Hals and his wife Liesbeth Reyniers) and the

Meagre Company in the Rijksmuseum, and *Malle Babbe* in Berlin, one finds, as number fourteen, the present *Portrait of a 50 year Old Man*, signed and dated 1635, from the collection of the Chevalier Lippmann von Lissingen (1827-1900) in Vienna (fig. 1).

It says much about the longtime status of the present portrait that it featured in Ungers exclusive overview. From the same Viennese collection also came Ungers sequential number 15, the *Portrait of a 53 Year Old Woman*, signed and dated 1640 (fig. 2). Were these two portraits, five years apart, but of the same size and both depicting the sitters in similar illusionistic stone oval cartouches, and both lit from the left, pendants? Apparently so, as they are first mentioned together as early as 1797, when both appeared as lots 90 and 91 in an anonymous Amsterdam sale (see Provenance). After passing through Leipzig, Kassel and Vienna, the works were acquired by the industrial and art collector Edouard Kums in Antwerp. In 1898, several years after his death the female portrait was sold at the

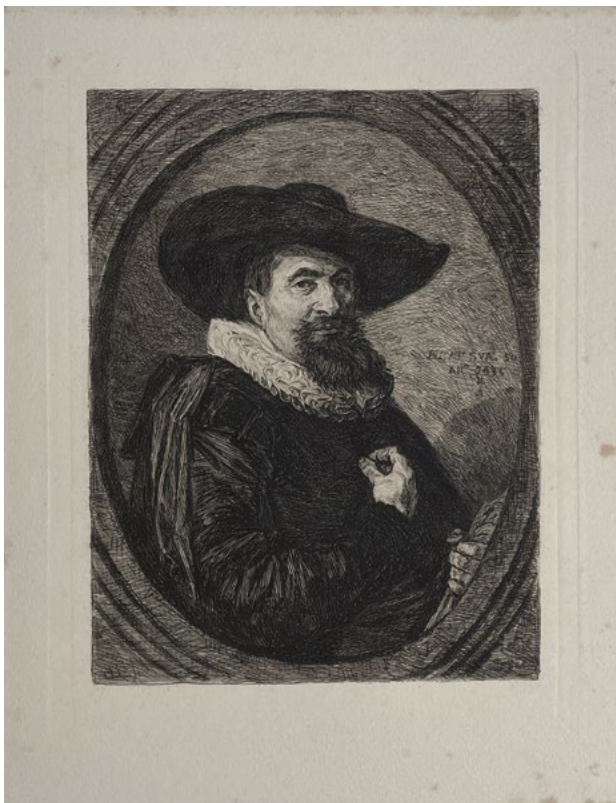


Fig. 1 William Unger after Frans Hals, *Portrait of a 50 Year Old Man*, etching, 18 x 13.5 cm., 1872/73



Fig. 2 William Unger after Frans Hals, *Portrait of a 53 Year Old Woman*, etching, 18 x 13.5 cm., 1872/73



Fig. 3 Frans Hals, *Portrait of a 53 Year Old Woman*, signed and dated 1640, oil on canvas, 85.2 x 68.1 cm., Ghent, Museum voor Schone Kunsten



Fig. 4 Frans Hals, *Portrait of an Elderly Gentleman*, c. 1627/30, oil on canvas, 115.6 x 91.4 cm., New York, The Frick Collection (formerly collection Maurice Kann)

Kums auction in Antwerp, where it was bought by the museum in Ghent, where it still resides today (fig. 3). The male portrait was sold separately via art dealer Charles Sedelmeyer and landed in Paris with the important collector Maurice Kann (1839-1906), who already owned Hals's *Portrait of a Man* of c. 1628 now in the Frick Collection (fig. 4). After Kann died, art dealer François Kleinberger acquired the portrait and in 1911 lent it to the exhibition of Dutch seventeenth century masters in the Jeu de Paume at the Place de la Concorde, Paris. This would prove to be the painting's last official public display, and its last European appearance altogether, as it was subsequently brought to New York during what art historian Dennis Weller has called 'the greatest period of Frans Hals collecting in America', when 'Hals [had] become one of the most sought-after painters by American collectors'.¹² From then on, the portrait remained in private collections in the United States for over a century, until 2022. In October 2023, the Salomon Lilian gallery showed the portrait to the public for the first time in over

a century, at Frieze Masters in London, coinciding with the long-awaited Frans Hals exhibition in the National Gallery (opening in February 2024 in Amsterdam).

The sitter of our portrait – portrayed in a feigned oval cartouche against a warm brown background – is an imposing man with a ruddy complexion, a sturdy nose, dark and grey hair, expressive dark eyebrows, and a full goatee with five o'clock shadow: not the fashionable facial hair growth of snotty young men but rather exuding a more serious stature. Fifty years old, he looks at the beholder from under his large hat (initially somewhat higher, as a visible pentimento reveals) with a self-assured calm, sympathetic but uncompromising. While this is surely a well-caught character trait, the impression is no doubt reinforced by Hals's strong modelling, the amazingly rich and vivid brushwork – his trademark – which overflows with confidence, and the appealing contrasts in light and shadow. The man's clothing is dignified but subdued. Underneath a modest white ruff, he

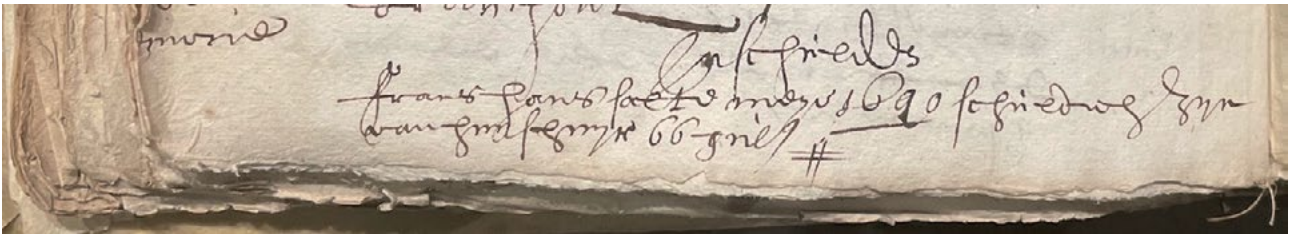


Fig. 5 Frans Hals' rental debt of 66 guilders per May 1640, estate inventory of Commertge Jacobs, 3 February 1640, Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief

wears a black jacket and cloak, stylishly rendered with a cool tonality ranging from silvery grey to deep blacks. While subtly feeling the lining of his jacket between his thumb and index finger – its shortening spectacularly captured – he firmly holds a leather glove with his right hand.

The sitter

Who is this intriguing gentleman, in his feigned oval cartouche? Was he a well-off Haarlem burgher, like so many of Frans Hals's sitters? As he was 50 in 1635, it follows that he was born c. 1584/85. He was thus a peer of Hals. It has been suggested that he might have been a Mennonite. His relatively sober clothing style – he wears no visible cuffs, his ruff is small, and his clothes are all black – and his plain beard could point at that.¹³ Moreover, the clothing choice of his supposed counterpart, the woman in Ghent, adheres to this hypothesis as well. Even more than the man, she dresses plain, weary of frivolities. Then again, there were no fixed rules for clothing, and the sitters might just as well be members of the Reformed Church. The curious fact that the woman was painted five years later poses more questions. Aged 53 in 1640, she was born c. 1586/87. If one considers the works to be pendants, was she our sitter's wife? And if so, why weren't they both portrayed in 1635? Might she have been his second (or third?) wife, and was 1640 the year of their wedding, for which occasion Hals portrayed her? Or was she not our sitter's wife at all, but rather another family member, possibly a sister? While these data seemingly provide a viable set of search criteria, they also are to a large extent open to interpretation and have so far not led to an identification.

Searching for clues in Hals's biography, one notices that in January 1640 – Hals is then living in Haarlem's Lange Begijnestraat – he is summoned to pay a rental debt of 33 guilders to his landlady, the Reformed Commertge Jacobs.¹⁴ She was the widow of Willem Jansz Tas (d. 1638), in life a captain on a Dutch convoy fleet.¹⁵ Commertje is about to remarry a certain Lowijs van (der) Vliet.¹⁶ In her February 1640 estate inventory, we read that 'Frans Hals in May will owe [Commertge] a rental fee of 66 guilders' (fig. 5). Could this specific set of circumstances – Hals' rental debt of precisely the price of a portrait by his



Fig. 6 Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Man*, c. 1614/15, oil on canvas, 73.7 x 55.2 cm, New York, Brooklyn Museum of Art

hand¹⁷, the widow to whom this debt is owed about to remarry, and the year 1640 – relate to Lilian and Ghent portraits? Possibly. Hals was perpetually in debt, and he is documented as having sometimes paid off these debts with paintings, by others and by himself.¹⁸ He could thus hypothetically have paid his landlady with painting her portrait (the Ghent portrait), as a pendant to the already existing Lilian portrait of five years earlier, which in that case would most logically depict either her new husband Lowijs van Vliet, or – possibly – her deceased husband Willem Jansz Tas. While documents indicate that both Tas and Commertge Jacobs could well be born in the right timeframe, research in the Haarlem archives has so far yielded no confirmation on either year of birth.¹⁹

The illusionistic oval stone cartouches in which the Lilian and Ghent sitters are depicted could provide another potential lead. Hals had used oval framing for his sitters since the 1610s (fig. 6), and in the next decade, too, he reverted to the device (fig. 7).



Fig. 7 Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Bearded Man with a Ruff*, 1625, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 63.5 cm., New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Our portrait heralds a last revisiting of the painted oval in Hals's oeuvre halfway the 1630s. Alongside two pendant portraits in Stockholm of c. 1638, the two pendant portraits of the Haarlem silk dyer Pieter Dircksz Tjarck (d. by 1645), now in Los Angeles, and his wife Maria (or Maritgen) Claesdr Larp, in the National Gallery, London, especially, ask for attention (figs. 8, 9).²⁰ Not only are both painted on canvas and show a cartouche rather similar to the Lilian and Ghent portraits, they are of virtually identical size, and are generally dated c. 1635/38. Could they, therefore, form parts of a family group? If this were the case, our portraits could hypothetically depict either Pieter Tjarck's parents – Dirck Tjarck and Geertruida Worp – or those of Maria Larp, Claes Larp and his wife Van Wanenburg. However, apart from a complete lack of documents concerning these parents (their names are merely known from inscriptions on the reverse of the Los Angeles and London canvases) the family were Catholics, which is intently reflected in, before all, Tjarck's dandyish flamboyance.²¹ With that, we seem worlds apart from the environment communicated in the Lilian and Ghent portraits.

Hals was famous for his magnificent militia pieces. Many of the officers depicted in these group portraits also commissioned Hals to paint individual portraits of themselves. If our sitter was indeed a Mennonite – who refrained from armed institutions – then participating in the militia was out of the question. If he wasn't, he could be among the depicted officers. Unfortunately, it hasn't been possible to identify him in either of Hals' militia pieces. However, a 1619 dated civic guard piece by Hals's Haarlem colleague Frans Pietersz de Grebber (c. 1573-1649) in the Frans Hals Museum includes an officer who resembles, to considerable degree, our sitter (fig. 10). Could this younger man be identical to our sitter, as depicted sixteen years earlier? Even if he'd be the same person, the name of this officer has not come down to us.

In fact, we might even wonder if our sitter is from Haarlem at all. During the period 1633-1635 Hals is documented to have spent periods in Amsterdam, where he worked on the so-called *Meagre Company*



Fig. 8 Frans Hals, *Portrait of Pieter Dircksz Tjarck*, c. 1635/38, oil on canvas, 82.3 x 69.9 cm., Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art



Fig. 9 Frans Hals, *Portrait of Maria Larp*, c. 1635/38, oil on canvas, 83.4 x 68.1 cm., London, National Gallery

militia piece, now in the Rijksmuseum.²² As Bas Dudok van Heel has demonstrated, Hals was commissioned to paint the civic guard officers through the mediation of the Amsterdam art dealer Hendrick Uylenburgh (c. 1584/89-1661), who had recently employed Rembrandt (1606-1669) as his *chef d'atelier*, and who probably hosted Hals and the large canvas in his house/studio at Breestraat.²³ During intermittent periods – Hals stayed in Amsterdam on and off but would ultimately abandon the



Fig. 10 Frans de Grebber, *The First Platoon under Captain Reijnier van Hoogensteijn, of the Third Company of the Calivermen Civic Guard*, 1619, oil on canvas, 208 x 500 cm., Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum, detail of one of the officers

group portrait, which was finished by Pieter Codde (1599-1678) – he took on individual Amsterdam commissions as well, such as the three portraits of the Nachtglass brothers, now in The Hague and Dresden, and those of the Amsterdam regent Nicolaes Hasselaer and his second wife Sara Wolphaerts van Diemen, now in the Rijksmuseum, and painted c. 1634/35 (fig. 11).²⁴ In principle, our portrait could thus likewise depict an Amsterdam citizen, possibly of a Mennonite background. In fact, Uylenburgh himself ticks several boxes: he was a Mennonite, during the mid-1630s he stood in close contact with Hals (who owed an important commission to him), and he was born in the right time period, between 1584/89.²⁵ However, no documents refer to Hals' portrait of him, nor does the woman in Ghent fit in obviously within this narrative. While Uylenburgh's wife Maria van Eyck died in 1638, he is not known to have remarried.²⁶ Without documented life dates or archival descriptions one can only speculate how the portraits ended up in Amsterdam in 1797.



Fig. 11 Frans Hals, *Portrait of Nicolaes Hasselaer* (1593-1635), c. 1634/35, oil on canvas, 79.5 x 66.5 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

The portrait reinstated

While, as seen, the present portrait – fully signed with Frans Hals's monogram, dated, and inscribed with the sitter's age – enjoyed a stellar reputation among scholars and the public since its surfacing in 1797, this changed in 1962, when Frans Hals expert Seymour Slive (1920-2014) expressed doubts about its attribution in a modest catalogue entry on the Ghent portrait, which he did accept as autograph.²⁷ With that he undeservedly sealed the portrait's fate for years to come, especially as after repeating his opinion in his normative Frans Hals *catalogue raisonné* of 1974 (see Literature). Reassessing Slive's dismissal, one must conclude that he was off the mark here. That said, one should consider the circumstances at hand: Slive had never seen the work in real life, nor can he have had more than at best mediocre photos of it at his disposal. A great connoisseur, his observations about 'poor drawing (particularly of the hands)', especially, can only be assigned to this lack of available visual material.²⁸ In fact, the author of the 1876 Paris auction catalogue already noticed that 'In the portrait of a man we recommend to

connoisseurs the foreshortened hand which rests on the character's doublet: it is a marvel which would be enough to identify the master.'²⁹ Moreover, the painting had been extensively overpainted, what clearly impaired its appreciation. Last seen in the early 1950s and known to scholars only from black/white reproductions, the portrait's resurfacing in 2020, after a near 70-year hibernation, brought about its gigantic potential. Frans Hals expert Prof. Claus Grimm, who had previously followed Slive's assessment, includes the painting in the A-I Category ('Works that were executed in all areas by the hand of the master' 120 works in total) of his forthcoming Frans Hals *catalogue raisonné*, in which he underlines the painting's transformation following treatment, and lauds the cool accentuated tonality that has emerged 'in contrast to the earlier, yellowed and smoother surface impression. To achieve this, an entire layer of smoothing overpainting needed to be removed.'³⁰ Indeed, benefitting tremendously from an expert restoration treatment, Hals's marvelous brushwork and the work's exceptional spatial strength can now again be appreciated in full.³¹

JH

Notes

- 1 'Hals. (F.) / hoog 36 breed 28 duim. Doek. / 90. Een mans Portrait ten halverlyf te zien, houdende zyn handschoen in de hand; zeer konstig en fix behandeld. / Door Denzelven. / Hoog en breed als de voorgaande. Doek. / 91. Een Vrouwen Portrait, met een geplooid kraag om de hals, houdende haare handen over elkander; niet minder als de voorgaande.' Hals' *Portrait of a 53 Year Old Woman*, signed and dated 1640, oil on canvas, 85.2 x 68.1 cm., is now in the Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent. See below for a broader discussion.
- 2 Oil on canvas, 36 x 28 inch. 'Zwey Portraits, wovon das eine einen Man von gesetzten Jahren im runden Hut und spanischer Kleidung, das andere eine Frau in einfacher haustracht darstellt. Beyde Bilder haben die Signatur des Meisters aber verschiedene Jahreszahlen. Das männliche is 1635, das weibliche hingegen 1640 gefertigt!' The present portrait is further described as 'durch freye leichte Behandlung des lebendigen Kopfs und der Hände besonderes interessant'. See Trautscholdt 1957, p. 229.
- 3 According to Bode 1883, p. 83, under cat. no. 39, the pendant.
- 4 According to Bode 1883, p. 83 (as 'Mr. Kyms'). After the death of Édouard Kums in 1891, his widow Dominica Kums-Van der Elst and son Armand Kums (1848-1897) publicly displayed the Kums collection in the Hotel Kums (Antwerp, Paardenmarkt 68). Following Armand Kums' death, the collection was put up for sale. The 1898 sale catalogue includes the pendant (bought there by the Ghent museum) but not our portrait, suggesting that it had already been sold, either following the death of Édouard Kums, or after his son's passing. See sale Antwerp, Hotel Kums, 17/18 May 1898, lot 75 (no mention of the present portrait). Our portrait is mentioned again in the 1898 Sedelmeyer overview of 300 paintings that had at one point been with Sedelmeyer, as 'Now in the collection of M. Maurice Kann, Paris', implying that Sedelmeyer obtained the present portrait (in)directly from the Kums family and sold it to Kann before/in 1898.
- 5 According to Bode/Binder 1914. See also the Scott & Fowles Co. label on the stretcher of the present painting.
- 6 The present portrait's previous frame bears an Acquavella label on its reverse, with stock no. 4865.
- 7 Presumably John Joseph Hyland Jr (1912-1998), admiral in the United States Navy, who later lived in Washington D.C. and Honolulu.
- 8 Published simultaneously in French (*Eaux-Fortes d'après Frans Hals...*). The consecutive no. 15 is the portrait's pendant.
- 9 Bearing no date, the publication seems a reprint of Unger/Vosmaer 1873 without Vosmaer's essay on Hals, spread over two volumes each containing ten prints. The consecutive no. 15 is the portrait's pendant.
- 10 Biography based on I. van Thiel-Stroman, 'Frans Franchoisz Hals', in: N. Köhler (ed.), *Painting in Haarlem 1500-1850 : The collection of the Frans Hals Museum*, Ghent 2006, pp. 178-184.
- 11 See C.D.M. Atkins, *The signature style of Frans Hals : painting, subjectivity, and the market in early modernity*, Amsterdam 2012.
- 12 D.P. Weller, 'Frans Hals in America: Another Embarrassment of Riches', in: *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 9:1 (Winter 2017). See <https://jhna.org/articles/frans-hals-america-another-embarrassment-riches/> (website accessed October 2023).
- 13 I thank Prof. Dr. Frans Grijzenhout for these tentative observations, email April-May 2023, and oral communication. According to Grijzenhout, the ruff 'à la confusion' is somewhat frivolous but not unseen among Mennonites. I also thank Dr. Bas Dudok van Heel (oral communication) who further observed the modest size of the ruff, implying the possibility that the sitter is a Mennonite.
- 14 I. van Thiel-Stroman, 'Documenten over Frans Hals : Geschreven en gedrukte bronnen 1582-1679', in S. Slive et al., *Frans Hals*, exh. cat. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art, London, Royal Academy of Arts, Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum 1989-1990, pp. 371-415, p. 393, docs. 86-88. That Commertge was reformed appears from both the baptism of her children with her first husband Willem Tas, and her wedding with her second husband Lowijs van Vliet. See notes 16 and 19 below.
- 15 On Tas' activity as a Dutch convoy fleet captain in Spitsbergen in 1624, see: S. Muller, *Geschiedenis der Noordsche Compagnie*, Utrecht 1874, p. 227. Given his military background, Tas was certainly no Mennonite. The baptism of his children before the Reformed Church confirms this. See note 19.
- 16 The intended marriage was Reformed and took place on 12 February, the wedding on 26 February 1640. See Noord-Hollands Archief (NHA), archive 2142 (DTB Haarlem), 1.51 (Ref. mar.), fol. 93.
- 17 The one instance in which we are informed about payment details for a Frans Hals portrait concerns the so-called *Meagre Company* (now Rijksmuseum), an Amsterdam militia piece, for which Hals received 60 guilders per sitter, an amount later raised to 66 guilders, should Hals come to Amsterdam to finish the commission. See Van Thiel-Stroman 1989-1990, p. 389-391, docs. 73-75, 78.
- 18 Van Thiel-Stroman 1989-1990, p. 406, doc. 147; see also Van Thiel Stroman 2006, pp. 178-184, p. 180. It concerns a debt of 200 guilders to the baker Jan Ykesz, which Hals repays with furniture, and five paintings by Maerten van Heemskerck, Karel van Mander, himself and his sons.

- 19 Willem Tas and Commertge Jacobs baptized a son Cornelis on 25 October 1612, and a daughter Janneken on 1 May 1624, which makes supposed birth dates c. 1584/85 and 1586/87, respectively, completely conceivable. See NHA, arch. 2142 (DTB Haarlem), 1.5 (Ref. bapt.), fol. 302 (Cornelis); 1.7 (Ref. bapt.), fol. 377 (Janneken). Furthermore, their son Arent Willemsz Tas's intended marriage with Sara Willems took place on 1 October 1634. See NHA, arch. 2142 (DTB Haarlem), 1.50 (Ref. mar.), fol. 264.
- 20 For the Stockholm pendants, see Slive 1970/74, cat. nos. 113, 114 (c. 1638). For the portraits of Tjarck and Larp, see Slive 1970/74, cat. nos. 108, 112; A. Walsh, in: L. Lehmbeck (ed.), *Gifts of European art from The Ahmanson Foundation*, 3 vols., Los Angeles 2019, 3, pp. 32-35, cat. no. 5 (Frans Hals, 'Portrait of Pieter Dircksz Tjarck').
- 21 Their Catholicism follows a.o. from their marriage registration only in the city records and not in church.
- 22 Four 1636 documents make clear that Hals took on the commission for the *Meagre Company* in 1633 and that he was present in Amsterdam at St Jan's Day (24 June) 1635 (Van Thiel-Stroman 1989-1990, pp. 389-391, docs. 73-75, 78). In 1634 Hals is also documented in Amsterdam, when he tries to buy a painting in auction (Van Thiel-Stroman 1989-1990, p. 387-388, doc. 66).
- 23 S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, 'Rembrandt and Frans Hals Painting in the Workshop of Hendrick Uylenburgh', in: S.S. Dickey (ed.), *Rembrandt and his Circle : Insights and Discoveries*, Amsterdam 2017, pp. 17-43.
- 24 Dudok van Heel 2017, pp. 25-35, who additionally lists Pieter van den Broecke (London, Kenwood House), Jan Soop Sr (São Paulo, Museu de Arte), Jan Soop Jr (Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art) and Floris Soop (Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland) as Amsterdam sitters.
- 25 J. van der Veen, 'Hendrick Uylenburgh, factor van de Poolse koning en kunsthandelaar te Amsterdam', in: J. van der Veen, F. Lammertse, *Uylenburgh en Zoon : kunst en commercie van Rembrandt tot De Laïresse 1625-1675*, exh. cat. London, Dulwich Picture Gallery, Amsterdam, Museum Het Rembrandthuis 2006, pp. 12-59, p. 32. Uylenburgh's year of birth is unclear. Following variable age indications in three documents (1649, 1653 and 1654), he was born between 1584-1589. See also p. 19, note 16, where it is tentatively suggested that Uylenburgh's personal appearance in a 1609 document might suggest his age of majority (as opposed to a 1603 document, in which he is represented by a guardian), which would mean that he was born c. 1584.
- 26 Uylenburgh did have a sister Anna Gerritsdr Uylenburgh, whose year of birth is unknown. She was married to the Polish gardener Henricus Fondermill, apparently already in 1603. See Van der Veen 2006, p. 18-19, 55.
- 27 S. Slive, in: Haarlem 1962, under cat. no. 46: 'The Ghent portrait shows all the characteristics of the master's hand. The same cannot be said of the portrait which has been called its pendant.'
- 28 Remarkably, Slive did accept the strikingly similar but unsigned *Portrait of a Man in Oval Frame* (oil on canvas, 94 x 72.4 cm., Bedfordshire, Woburn Abbey, Slive 1970/74, cat. no. 111), whose left hand seems to fit slightly awkwardly within the oval.
- 29 Sale Paris, Drouot (Pillet/Féral), 16 March 1876, Introduction, p. vii: 'Dans le portrait d'homme nous recommandons aux connaisseurs la main en raccourci qui s'appuie au pourpoint de personnage: c'est une merveille qui suffirait à signer le maître.'
- 30 I wish to thank Professor Grimm for sharing his thoughts on the portrait, and his entry on the work. Email conversation September 2022 – October 2023.
- 31 Restoration treatment carried out by Studio Redivivus, The Hague, 2022-2023. Treatment report available on request.

cat. no. 3

Jacques Jordaens

1593 – Antwerp – 1678

The Triumph of Phoebus Apollo, and Prometheus' Gift of the Arts to Humanity

Oil on canvas
113 x 106.5 cm.

Provenance:

London, private collection(s), c. 1970¹

Spain, private collection, until 2000²

Sale London, Christie's, 19 April 2000, lot 26³

Spain, private collection, until 2023

Literature:

M. Díaz Padrón, *Jacob Jordaens and Spain*, Madrid 2018, pp. 288-291, cat. no. 44

Jacques Jordaens

Not much needs to be said about the tremendous reputation of Jacques Jordaens. The first of the eleven children of his eponymous father (d. 1618) – an affluent linen merchant – and his wife Barbara van Wolschaten (d. 1633), Jacques was baptised on 20 May 1593 in Antwerp's Cathedral of Our Lady.⁴ His upbringing was comfortable but culturally limited. In 1607/08 Jordaens was apprenticed to the painter Adam van Noort (1561/62-1641), who had also taught Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640). In contrast to Rubens, Jordaens never travelled to Italy after his apprenticeship. Instead, he directly registered as a master in the Antwerp Guild of St Luke in 1615/16. In 1616, moreover, he married van Noort's daughter Catharina and in 1618 settled with her in a house in Hoogstraat (no. 43). Among the most talented and original Antwerp artists of the 1610's, Jordaens worked with Rubens as an independent collaborator, assisting on the latter's many commissions. The 1620's cemented Jordaens'

position as the third of the 'Big Three' of the Flemish school of painting, alongside Rubens and Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641). In 1621 he was appointed dean of the Guild of St Luke. By then he had set up his own studio, and achieved great success, both artistically and commercially. Deeply rooted in the art of Rubens, Jordaens wasn't a mere adaptor of the pictorial idiom of his sixteen-year-old role model. Even more than Rubens – and certainly more than Van Dyck – Jordaens from his early years on developed a distinct preference for physicality, for volume and palpability, for cropped compositions and exuberance, caricature, and the grotesque. After Rubens and van Dyck died quickly after one another in the early 1640's, Jordaens remained the sole heir to Antwerp's painter's throne. His success during these years seems reflected in the purchase of the adjacent property in Hoogstraat, and the subsequent building project that transformed the house into a stately mansion, worthy of a great painter. In the



later part of his career, particularly, Jordaens received international praise and commissions from the courts of England, Denmark, Sweden and Holland. A crowning, but difficult achievement was his *Triumph of Frederik Hendrik*, painted in 1652 for the Oranjezaal in Huis ten Bosch. In 1665 Jordaens, still active, donated three works to the Antwerp Academy, newly founded at the initiative of the Guild of St Luke, to decorate its ceilings. Jordaens last securely datable paintings are from 1669. He died on 18 October 1678, coincidentally or not St Luke's day.

A spectacular painting with an enigmatic subject

This ambitious work, dating from Jordaens's mature years, has long escaped scholarly attention. Only surfacing briefly in a London auction in 2000, it was the recently deceased Spanish scholar of Netherlandish art Matthias Díaz Padrón (1935-2022) who first published the work in 2018. As Díaz Padrón underscored, the painting is characterized by its marvellous, dynamic composition and bold execution on the one hand, and its enigmatic iconography on the other. Traditionally known as *The Triumph of Apollo*, the work principally depicts a grouping of Gods from classical mythology, most of them rendered within a bright yellow-white halo of light, which encircles most of the approximately square picture plane. One comes across similar halos or semi-circles of light more often in Jordaens's work, mostly in his production between the years c. 1644-1654, roughly the suggested period of execution for the present work.⁵ Specifically in the last-dated of these works, the 1654-dated *Blessings of the Peace of Westphalia* in Oslo, the motif is close (fig. 1).⁶ Referencing a form of divinity, be it Christian or mythological, the unifying halo in our sketch seems to represent the firmament. At its top Uranus, the divine personification of the heavens, flanked by his two daughters Basilea and Rhea, looks down on the scene below, where the bright presence of Phoebus Apollo, the god of beauty, harmony, music and the arts, with his radiating crown of light and driving his four horse-driven sun chariot – a candid quote after Michelangelo (1475-1564) (figs. 2, 3) – dominates the sky. Behind Apollo, Saturn – or Cronus, Time – leans in. It is, though, the male figure underneath the



Fig. 1 Jacques Jordaens, *The Blessings of the Peace of Westphalia*, 1654, oil on canvas, 184.5 x 139.5 cm., Oslo, Nasjonalmuseet



Fig. 2
Cat. no. 3, detail of a horse



Fig. 3
Nicolas Beatrizet after Michelangelo, *Fall of Phaeton*, engraving, 41.3 x 28.8 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, detail of a horse (image reversed)

chariot, connecting the upper and lower group, that deserves special attention. He is Prometheus. Bare chested, dressed merely in a waist cloth, he holds his torch at the sun chariot's wheel, thus stealing fire from the gods.

According to Díaz Padrón, the composition's lower group poses problems of interpretation. Let us take a closer look. To the left we see Venus and Cupid in front of a nude female figure seen from the back, seated behind a painter's easel in the left foreground. Reclining in the right foreground is Mercury, the god of commerce, communication, trickery and thieves, and the messenger of the gods. Likewise seen from behind, he is recognizable by his steady attribute, the caduceus, or snake staff. Standing in the centre of the composition, with spear and feathered helmet, is Minerva, the goddess of wisdom. She leans over the shoulder of a kneeling bearded man, dressed in a waist cloth, who has positioned his left foot on a sculpted figure, at which he rests his left hand, while holding in his right hand a chisel. In front of him – amidst the entire lower group – we see a sculpted head, a compass, a square and a white female figure laying on her back with her left arm bent behind her head. Lastly, behind Mercury, we notice another reclining female figure.

Prometheus

Who is this kneeling man, who are these figures, and which theme did Jordaens depict? Díaz Padrón had correctly observed that one of the painting's most significant narrative elements – connecting its celestial part with the lower region – is that of Prometheus stealing the fire from Apollo's sun chariot. The clever Prometheus – his name meaning 'forethought' – a shrewd Titan, was the son of the Titan Iapetus and Clemene, and brother to Menoetius, Atlas and the dim-witted Epimetheus ('afterthought').⁷ The Greek poet Hesiod (c. 750-650 BC) was the first to write about Prometheus. A champion of mankind, Prometheus once tricked Jupiter when the gods and men – exclusively males at that point – were to settle on the division of sacrificial offerings between them.⁸ As an arbiter, Prometheus divided a slaughtered bull in two portions, hiding the

good meat in the animal's paunch, and wrapping its bones in 'glistening fat'. He left the choice to Jupiter, who picked the greasy bones, leaving the good meat to mankind. Jupiter, realising he had been tricked then 'planned sorrow and mischief against men. He hid fire'. Prometheus then stole back the fire for mankind in a hollow fennel-stalk. This infuriated Jupiter: "Son of Iapetus, surpassing all in cunning, you are glad that you have outwitted me and stolen fire – a great plague to you yourself and to men that shall be. But I will give men as the price for fire an evil thing in which they may all be glad of heart while they embrace their own destruction."

First Jupiter punished Prometheus by having him fastened at the summit of mount Caucasus, where he received daily visits from an eagle picking out his liver, until in due time Hercules rescued him from his torture. Jupiter, says Hesiod, then ordered Vulcan, god of fire, to 'mix earth with water and to put in it the voice and strength of humankind, and fashion a sweet, lovely maiden-shape, modelled after the immortal goddesses in face.' On Jupiter's insistence, other gods contributed. Minerva taught her 'needlework and the weaving of the varied web' and Venus 'shed grace upon her head and cruel longing and cares that weary the limbs.' Mercury 'put in her a shameless mind and a deceitful nature. [...] And he [Jupiter] called this woman Pandora [All-giving], because all they who dwelt on Olympus gave each a gift, a plague to men.'

Jupiter then sent Mercury to give Pandora to Epimetheus. Although warned by his brother Prometheus not to accept any gifts from Jupiter, the sheepish Titan accepted. Pandora then took off the lid from the jar with the gifts from the gods, and all the plagues escaped, harassing mankind ever since. Only Hope remained inside.

Vulcan and Pandora?

In search for a plausible interpretation of our painting, Díaz Padrón landed at Hesiod's account, and consequently proposed that the kneeling man is Vulcan, who is working on Pandora, surrounded by the contributing Gods. A clever thought, it

nonetheless poses immediate problems. Most importantly: where is Pandora? Assessing the meagre pictorial tradition, Pandora, following her unique, singular creation, was depicted as the shiny centre of attention, showing her jar amidst the gods (figs. 4, 5), or opening her jar with horrible consequences (fig. 6).⁹ In contrast, our painting shows not one but three figures, all three difficult to interpret, but none convincing as the central Pandora, none



Fig. 4 Jacques Callot, *The Creation and Descent of Pandora*, 1625/26, etching, 9.2 x 13.2 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 5 Cornelis Bloemaert after Abraham van Diepenbeeck, *The Creation of Pandora*, 1655, engraving, 28 x 17.8 cm., London, British Museum



Fig. 6 Antonio Fantuzzi after Rosso Fiorentino, *Pandora Opening the Box and Releasing All Evils*, c. 1540/45, etching, 22 x 28.8 cm., London, British Museum

showing a jar or box, Pandora's unique attribute. Moreover, the sculpted head and the instruments at hand seem to reference the visual arts (sculpture and architecture) and the female behind the easel is not a goddess, but rather an allegorical representation of the art of painting, once more emphasized by the brushes laying on the ground behind her. What do these allusions have to do with Vulcan's creation of Pandora? Moreover, in the pictorial tradition Vulcan is invariably depicted with his attribute the hammer.

The evolving Prometheus myth

The mythology surrounding Prometheus is varied, contradictory at times. The Greek writer Aeschylus (525/24-456/55 BC) in his great tragedy *Prometheus Bound* presented Prometheus in a more positive light.¹⁰ *Prometheus Bound* begins with Power and Force speaking to Vulcan, who has been ordered by Jupiter to chain Prometheus to the rocks of Caucasus: "And now, Vulcan [...] clamp this miscreant upon the high craggy rocks in shackles that cannot be broken. Your own flower, flashing fire, source of all arts, he has stolen and bestowed upon mortal creatures. Such is his offence; for this he is bound to make requital to the gods." Then bound Prometheus explains his side of the story:

"First of all, though they [mankind] had eyes to see, they saw to no avail; they had ears, but they did not understand [...] They had neither knowledge of houses built of bricks [...] nor yet of work in wood [...]"

They managed everything without judgment, until I taught them [...] Yes, and numbers, too, chiefest of sciences, I invented for them, and the combining of letters, creative mother of the arts of the Muses [...] Hear the sum of the whole matter in the compass of one brief word – every art possessed by man comes from Prometheus!”

For Aeschylus, Prometheus is thus the transmitter of the gods’ ‘flashing fire, source of all arts’, the divine bringer of culture and civilisation, and its teacher to mankind. In fact, in many other versions of the story, Prometheus – not Vulcan – is even credited as the creator of mankind. This notion was already common in 4th century BC Athens – among others Plato (c. 427-347 BC) presents Prometheus as such – but took firm root in Roman times. Ovid (43 BC-17 AD) in the first book of his *Metamorphoses* states: “Then Humankind was born. [...] Prometheus, blending [newborn earth containing heavenly fragments] with streams of rain, moulded them into an image of the all-controlling gods.”¹¹ Other authors, such as Catullus (c. 84-c. 54 BC), Horace (65-8 BC) and Lucian of Samosata (125-185 AD) followed suit. From the latter, in particular, a lengthy satirical conversation is known between Prometheus, Mercury and Vulcan, when the former gets tied to the rocks of Caucasus. In this frank conversation, bound Prometheus laments his fate: “Luckless that I am, when I have done no harm.” “No harm?” Mercury counters, “In the first place you undertook to serve out our meat and did it so unfairly and trickily that you abstracted all the best of it for yourself and cheated Zeus [Jupiter] by wrapping “bones in glistening fat”, for I remember that Hesiod says so. Then you made human beings, thoroughly unprincipled creatures, particularly the women; and to top all, you stole fire, the most valued possession of the gods, and actually gave that to men. When you have done so much harm, do you say that you have been put in irons without having done any wrong?” The conversation continues, and at a given moment Prometheus states: “it occurred to me that it would be a good idea to take a little bit of clay and create a few living things, making them like us in appearance [...] and kneading them, I moulded men, inviting Athena [Minerva], moreover, to give me a hand in the task.”¹²

In short, Lucian here presents a narrative with similar elements, but rather different from Hesiod’s and Aeschylus’ accounts. Following Lucian, Prometheus tricked Jupiter with bones not in the guise of an arbiter between mankind and the gods, but with the goal of keeping the meat for himself, as there were no humans yet. In fact, he himself created both men and women, and – important here – had Minerva helping him out in the process. Interestingly, we find this iconography in contemporary Roman art. On the base of the *Prometheus Sarcophagus* of c. 240 AD in the Louvre, Paris, Prometheus is seen moulding little humans, while Minerva, standing behind him and resting her hand on his shoulder, assists with animating the clay figures (fig. 7).¹³ The same iconography is found, for instance, on another *Prometheus Sarcophagus* in the Capitoline Museums, Rome (fig. 8). Clearly functioning here within the context of the representation of mankind’s journey through life, we again see Prometheus claying



Fig. 7 *Prometheus Sarcophagus*, Roman, c. 240 AD, Paris, Musée du Louvre, detail of the base with relief of Prometheus creating mankind



Fig. 8 *Prometheus Sarcophagus*, Roman, 3rd century, Rome, Capitoline Museums, Palazzo Nuovo, base with relief of Prometheus creating mankind



Fig. 9 *Prometheus Sarcophagus*, 3rd century AD, Rome, Vatican Museums, fragment with Prometheus creating a woman

humans, with Minerva animating the figures (with a butterfly)¹⁴ amidst a grouping of gods. That we are not mistaken in assuming Prometheus' identity is evidenced by yet another 3rd century sarcophagus, in the Vatican Museums, on which the characters' names are added: Mercury, Prometheus and 'mulier' (woman), the figure Prometheus is working on (fig. 9). The idea of Prometheus as the creator of mankind persisted into the art of the Renaissance. Around 1510/15 the Florentine Piero di Cosimo (1462-1522) painted two highly original panels addressing the theme, one in Munich (fig. 10), the other in Strassbourg.¹⁵ The Munich work depicts Prometheus as an artist proudly standing next to his creation – a magnificent high-Renaissance male sculpture on a stone pedestal – in the company of Minerva, who in the upper right carries him through the sky



Fig. 10 Piero di Cosimo, *Prometheus Fashioning the First Man*, c. 1510/15, oil on panel, 66.4 x 118.2 cm., Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek

towards the life-giving celestial fire, a subsequent scene depicted in the Strassbourg pendant, which also includes Prometheus' punishment. The famous *Love of the Gods* fresco cycle of 1597-1609 in the Palazzo Farnese, Rome, by Annibale Carracci (1560-1609), also boasts two frescoes with Prometheus, one depicting his creation of mankind, assisted by Minerva (the other of his punishment in Caucasus). A must-see for artists visiting Rome, Carracci's designs also circulated through drawings and prints, such as the 1641 print cycle after Carracci by Jacques Belly (1609-1674) (fig. 11).¹⁶ Above the Alps, we come across the subject as well. Plate two of the ambitious series of *Metamorphoses* illustrations by Hendrick Goltzius (1558-1617) depicts Prometheus' creation of mankind, this time with Minerva joining Prometheus as he steals the fire from Apollo's sun chariot



Fig. 11 Jacques Belly after Annibale Carracci, *Minerva and Prometheus*, 1641, engraving, 15.9 x 26.4 cm., Princeton, Princeton University Art Museum



Fig. 12 Hendrick Goltzius, *Prometheus Stealing Fire from Apollo's Chariot and Animating Mankind*, 1589, engraving, 17.6 x 25.2 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

(fig. 12). The divine fire is essential to the image, as is underlined by the Latin caption: 'datque homini e celo flammas, animatque Prometheus' (Prometheus gave to man fire from heaven and animated him). As with Piero, it is suggested here that it was the fire that ignited life.

Jordaens' Prometheus

It seems not necessarily very likely that in Antwerp Jordaens was aware of Piero's paintings. He must have had a notion, though, of both the existence of a pictorial tradition for the subject, and of its literary sources.¹⁷ Within this perspective, it is important to note that Jordaens treated the Prometheus theme earlier on. In a splendid painting now in Cologne (fig. 13), datable to c. 1640/42, Jordaens emulated his friend Peter Paul Rubens's famous *Prometheus Bound*, now in Philadelphia and painted with the assistance of Frans Snijders (1579-1657), who was responsible for the formidable eagle picking

out Prometheus' liver (fig. 14).¹⁸ Whereas it has been argued that Jordaens here largely mimicked Rubens's effort, which follows Hesiod's account of the Prometheus myth, his painting in fact diverges from it significantly. For one, it prominently depicts Mercury, who is absent from the Philadelphia work. What's more, whereas in the Rubens-Snijders work Prometheus' only attribute is his fiery torch, Jordaens added to the torch (visible in the lower left corner) a sculpted female bust and a bag of 'glistening bones'. It rightfully led Jonathan Bikker in 2004 to conclude that Jordaens based himself not on Hesiod, but rather on Lucian, whose satire as we have seen presented a discussion between bound Prometheus and Mercury, concentrating on Prometheus' three offenses: tricking Jupiter with ox bones, creating human beings and stealing fire for them.¹⁹ The three 'attributes' in the painting thus refer to Prometheus's three offenses that caused the gruesome punishment central to the work.



Fig. 13 Jacques Jordaens, *Prometheus Bound*, c. 1640/42, oil on canvas, 245 x 178 cm., Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz Museum & Fondation Corboud



Fig. 14 Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snijders, *Prometheus Bound*, 1611/12-1618, oil on canvas, 242.6 x 209.6 cm., Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art

The gift of 'flashing fire, source of all arts'

Not only does the Cologne painting therefore provide tangible evidence for Jordaens' awareness of Lucian's version of the myth, in which Prometheus, with Minerva's assistance, features as mankind's creator, it also features the sculpted bust, a motif that Jordaens recycled in the present painting, linking the two works and referencing Prometheus' creativity, rather than Vulcan. Indeed, given the painting's problematic match with the Pandora narrative and this theme's pictorial tradition on the one hand, and given the much more comfortable alignment with the Prometheus myth on the other, both with regards to several textual sources and the pictorial tradition surrounding that theme, we might well conclude that our painting depicts Prometheus creating mankind, with the help of Minerva. Consequently, Prometheus is then depicted twice, which explains the two figures' identical appearance. The double presence of a protagonist within one image is not per se unusual – the painting by Piero and the engraving by Goltzius likewise do so – but it does inform us that Jordaens wanted to articulate both of Prometheus' actions, and with equal prominence. Had he merely wanted to tell the story of mankind's creation, he could have done with depicting the stealing of the fire in the background, as Goltzius did. But that was not Jordaens' intention. By showing Apollo and his sun chariot in all his magnificence, Jordaens emphasised the power and glory of the divine solarian fire and the magnitude of its gift to humanity, specifically since, as Aeschylus already noted, the divine fire was the 'source of all arts', just as Apollo is known as the patron of the arts. As such we see him, for instance, in an engraving after Jan van der Straet (1523-1605), amidst all objects relating to arts and crafts (fig. 15). Among them one finds a compass, a square and a little sculpture, objects likewise seen in our painting. In the background a painter is at work inside a palace.

Jordaens' thus aimed to glorify Prometheus' divine gift of the arts to mankind, a gift directly sourced from Apollo. Taking another look at the by-figures in the painting's lower region, we see that at least one putto in the lower right holds a hammer and a chisel, another clear reference to the arts. The nude



Fig. 15 Johann Sadeler after Jan van der Straet, *Apollo as Patron of the Arts*, 1597, engraving, 21.4 x 28.1 cm., London, British Museum

figure behind the easel can, as said, be identified as the allegorical personification of painting, Pictura, painting ideal beauty, appropriately represented by Venus. A familiar scene, we find it for instance with Hans Rottenhammer, whose *Allegory of the Arts with Pictura Painting Venus* in Berlin similarly shows Venus with Cupid, painted by Pictura who is surrounded by allegorical representations of various arts (fig. 16).²⁰ What, finally, can be said



Fig. 16 Hans Rottenhammer, *Allegory of the Arts with Pictura Painting Venus*, c. 1600, oil on copper, 28 x 22.3 cm., Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie

about Mercury's presence? We have encountered Mercury in conversation with bound Prometheus, and he featured prominently on Roman Prometheus sarcophagi. There, however, he fulfilled the role of 'psychopompos', guiding the souls of the deceased to the afterlife. Here Jordaens alludes to another aspect of his multi-faceted divine persona, that of instructor, herald of civilisation, and patron of the arts, a set of characteristics well-reflected in Goltzius' engraving *Mercury and his Children* of 1596, where a statue of Mercury on a pedestal is surrounded by artists, and we again find the same objects seen in our painting: a sculpted head, a hammer and a chisel a palette and a maulstick, and an easel with a painting, not coincidentally of Venus and Cupid (fig. 17).²¹

Function?

Unfortunately, documentation on the early provenance of our painting lacks. Considering its allegorical character, one could imagine the work to have been intended for a public building. Moreover, given its virtuoso execution one might be tempted to categorize it – as did Díaz Pádrón – as a modello, a sketch in preparation of a larger painting.²² Within this regard, it is noteworthy that our work (113 x 106.5



Fig. 17 Jan Saenredam after Hendrick Goltzius, *Mercury and his Children*, 1596, engraving, 25.7 x 18 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 18 Jacques Jordaens, *Modello for the Triumph of Frederik Hendrik*, 1651, oil on canvas, 120 x 117 cm., Brussels, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium

cm.) roughly matches in size with the three modellos that Jordaens executed in 1651 in preparation of his masterful *Triumph of Frederik Hendrik* (731 x 756 cm.) in the Oranjezaal, Huis ten Bosch. These compositional variations, kept in Antwerp, Brussels (fig. 18) and Warsaw, and measuring 116 x 126 cm., 120 x 117 cm., and 119.5 x 117.5 cm., respectively, were meant to submit to Jordaens' commissioner, stadtholder Frederik Hendrik's widow Amalia van Solms (1602-1675), her advisor Constantijn Huygens (1596-1687) and the project's mastermind, Jacob van Campen (1596-1657).²³

Stylistically, the Oranjezaal modellos are indeed not far off. That said, these works are 'hors catégorie', done in preparation for a unique painting in every sense. One-offs, they were exclusively meant to be presented to a royal patron, thus falling outside the scope of Jordaens' usual working practice, and therefore not per se ideally suitable for comparison. Given the full development of the present composition, the considerable eye for detail and the lack of a larger extant work, one might, instead, consider the possibility that our work is a fully developed painting. In an intriguing case study, Jordaens expert Brecht Vanoppen has recently analysed Jordaens' studio practice, concluding that



Fig. 19 Jacques Jordaens, *Industry and Trade Promote the Flowering of Art*, 1663/65, oil on canvas, 185 x 486.4 cm., Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen

‘it might be fruitful to have another look at other roughly sketched works by the master, whether on canvas or panel. Perhaps they should be seen not as sketches or models in the usual sense. They might, instead, represent something slightly different: unfinished paintings that, when a potential buyer was found, Jordaens would then further elaborate. How he did so would depend not only on the buyer’s wishes, but also on how much that buyer was willing to spend.’²⁴



Fig. 20 Jacques Jordaens, *Justitia*, 1663/65, oil on canvas, 240.2 x 230.3 cm., Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen

Was our painting such a work for the open market? Or can we think of a specific project that fits its iconography? Based on style and spatial arrangement, Díaz Padrón suggested a date of execution around 1650 for the work. While certainly possible a somewhat later dating remains, also considering its broad execution, entirely plausible. Although evidence lacks, it is tempting to associate our painting with Antwerp’s art academy, founded in 1663. In 1665 Jordaens was among the first artists to donate three works – now in the Antwerp museum – to the academy’s new meeting room, the ‘Schilderskamer’.²⁵ Two of the works, *Pegasus* and *Industry and Trade Promote the Flowering of Art* (fig. 19) were conceived as part of the meeting room’s ceiling ensemble, together with a third work, *Antwerp, Nourishing the Painters* by Theodor Boeijermans (1620-1678).²⁶ Whereas this ensemble neatly fits the artistic ambitions of the academy, Jordaens’ third work, *Justitia* – although inscribed ‘Arti Pictoriae Iacobus Iordaens donabat’ (Jacobus Jordaens gave [this] to the Art of Painting) – does not (fig. 20). In fact, this painting with its juridical theme is a variation of a work that Jordaens painted in 1663 for the court of justice in the townhall of Hulst, and a rather random gift for a new art academy.²⁷ Our painting, with its clear allegorical references to the divine origins of the arts and boasting Prometheus, the first artist and instructor of all arts to mankind, as its protagonist, seems a much more suitable alternative. Could our painting, then, have been an

initially intended, but somehow withdrawn painting for the new academy project? With archival support lacking, it remains merely a passing, but nevertheless appealing thought. Or could Jordaens, alternatively, have intended the work for the decoration of his own house? A likewise opportune destination, we hear nowhere of the work, and in Jordaens's estate sale of 1734 it is not mentioned either.²⁸ For now we will thus have to do with our appreciation of Jordaens's originality and his magnificent execution of this unusual theme.

JH

Notes

- 1 According to Díaz Padrón 2018, p. 228, as 'documented in London collections around 1970'.
- 2 According to Díaz Padrón 2018, p. 228, note 1.
- 3 The sale catalogue's entry mentions Nora De Poorter's endorsement of the attribution. Díaz Padrón 2018, p. 288, presumably basing himself on the London sale, mentions as provenance 'London, private collection'. However, the painting seems to have been in Spain from 2000 on.
- 4 Biography based on R.-A. d'Hulst, 'Jordaens' levens en werken', in: H. Devisscher, N. De Poorter (eds.), *Jacob Jordaens (1593-1678)*, exh. cat. Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen 1993, 2 vols., 1 (*Schilderijen en Wandtapijten*), pp.22-29.
- 5 *The Triumph of Neptune and Amphitrite*, 1644, oil on canvas, 220 x 307 cm., Antwerp, Rubenshuis; *The Triumph of Time*, 1649/50, 383.5 x 206 cm., The Hague, Oranjezaal; *Moses Striking Water From the Well*, 1650s, oil on canvas, 221.5 x 266 cm., Kassel, Gemäldegalerie; *The Last Judgement*, 1653, oil on canvas, 391 x 300 cm., Paris, Musée du Louvre; *The Blessings of the Peace of Westphalia*, 1654, oil on canvas, 184.5 x 139.5 cm., Oslo, Nasjonalmuseet.
- 6 As noted by Díaz Padrón and Nora De Poorter (sale catalogue London 2000).
- 7 On the development of the Prometheus myth, both in written sources and in art, see O. Raggio, 'The Myth of Prometheus : Its Survival and Metamorphoses up to the Eighteenth Century', in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 21/1 (1958), pp. 44-62; L.B. van der Meer, 'Prometheus in Beeld', in: *Hermeneus* 59 (1987), pp. 58-66; G. Janzen, 'De lotgevallen van Prometheus in de lage landen : De uitbeelding van de Prometheusmythe in Holland en Vlaanderen vanaf 1500', in: *Hermeneus* 59 (1987), pp. 146-158; R. Steiner, *Prometheus : ikonologische und anthropologische Aspekte der bildenden Kunst vom 14. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert*, Munich 1991; E. Moormann, W. Uitterhoeve, *Van Achilles tot Zeus : Thema's uit de klassieke mythologie in literatuur, muziek, beeldende kunst en theater*, Nijmegen 1987 (6th ed. 1999), pp. 254-257.
- 8 Hesiod's account of the story of Prometheus is found – with some narrative overlap – divided over two of his texts: *Works and Days* and *Theogony*. See Hesiod, 'Works and Days', in: *Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns and Homeric : with an English translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White, M.A.*, London/New York 1914, pp. 2-63, pp. 4-9 (esp. verse 59-82); Hesiod, 'Theogony', in: idem., pp. 78-153, pp. 117-125 (esp. verse 535-559). See Perseus Digital Library: <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/> (digital 1914 edition, website accessed January 2024).
- 9 On Pandora, see: Moormann/Uitterhoeve 1999, pp. 229-230; W. Hansen, *Classical Mythology : A Guide to the Mythical World of the Greeks and Romans*, Oxford 2020, pp. 264-265.
- 10 Aeschylus, 'Prometheus Bound', in: *Aeschylus : with an English translation by Herbert Weir Smyth*, 2 vols., London/New York 1926, 1. See also Perseus Digital Library: <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/> (digital 1926 edition, website accessed January 2024). The following citations are lines 1-10; 447-506.
- 11 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book 1, 78-83. Translation by A.S. Kline (2000). See <https://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/trans/Ovhome.htm#askline> (website accessed January 2024).
- 12 Lucian, 'Prometheus', in: *Lucian : with an English Translation by A. M. Harmon*, 8 vols., London/New York/Cambridge 1913-1967, 2 (1919), pp. 241-266, esp. pp. 245-257.
- 13 See Raggio 1958, pp. 46-48.
- 14 Van der Meer 1987, p. 64 explains that the Greek word for spirit 'psyche' was, from the 4th century BC on, also translated as butterfly. The butterfly concept persisted in Roman art and funeral epigrams in Latin.
- 15 See D. Geronimus, in: G. Hirschauer, D Geronimus, *Piero di Cosimo : the poetry of painting in Renaissance Florence*, exh. cat. Washington, National Gallery of Art, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi 2015, pp. 195-199, cat. nos. 31a-b, with literature references. See also P. Simons, 'Piero di Cosimo's Creation of Pandora', in: *Notes in the History of Art* 34/2 (2015), pp. 34-40.
- 16 A drawing attributed to Francesco Albani after Carracci's *Prometheus and Minerva* is preserved in the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, inv. no. 1950.014.001.
- 17 Jordaens did not read Latin very well, Greek even less so. Nonetheless his subject choices and his approach to these themes betray that he had a profound knowledge about classical literature. See I. Schadies, 'Small Latin, less Greek : Jordaens and the Humanist Tradition' in: J. van der Auwera et al., *Jordaens and the Antique*, exh. cat. Brussels, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium,

- Kassel, Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel, Museum Fridericianum 2012-2013, pp.14-23.
- 18 For Jordaens' painting, see esp. N. De Poorter, in: Antwerp 1993, 1, pp. 184-187, cat. no. A57; I. Schaudies, in: Brussels/Kassel 2012-2013, pp. 110-111, cat. no. 42.
 - 19 J. Bikker, 'Lucian's Prometheus as a Source for Jordaens and van Baburen', in: *Simiolus : Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 31/1 (2004-2005), pp. 46-53.
 - 20 The relationship between Venus and Pictura is thoroughly analysed in E.J. Sluijter, 'Venus, Visus and Pictura', in: idem., *Seductress of Sight : Studies in Dutch Art of the Golden Age*, Zwolle 2000, pp. 86-159, esp. pp. 131-144.
 - 21 For a further discussion of Mercury as a patron of the arts, especially with Goltzius, see E.J. Sluijter, 'Emulating Sensual Beauty: Representations of Danaë from Gossaert to Rembrandt', in: *Simiolus : Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 27 (1999), pp. 4-45, pp. 31-34, with further references.
 - 22 Díaz Pádrón 2018, p. 288.
 - 23 M. Vandenven, in: Antwerp 1993, pp. 252-254, cat. no. A82.
 - 24 B. Vanoppen, 'The Conception of the Meleager and Atalanta Paintings by Jacob Jordaens', in: *Boletín del Museo del Prado* 35 (2017), pp. 83-91, 136-140, p. 140. I wish to thank Brecht Vanoppen for his constructive comments on an earlier draft of this essay and our subsequent discussion of the work, February 2024. See further on Jordaens' studio practice N. De Poorter, 'Seriewerk en recyclage: doorgedreven efficiëntie in het geroutineerde atelier van Jacob Jordaens', in: H. Vlieghe, A. Balis, C. van de Velde (eds.), *Concept, Design and Execution in Flemish Painting (1550-1700)*, pp. 213-232.
 - 25 Inv. nos. 218, 219, 220. See M. Rooses, *Jordaens' leven en werken*, Amsterdam/Antwerp 1906, pp. 210-213; R.-A. d'Hulst, 'Jacob Jordaens en de Schilderskamer van de Antwerpse Academie', in: *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen* 1967, pp. 131-149; De Poorter 2000; J. Lampo, *In het spoor van de Academie : kunsten in Antwerpen*, Schoten 2013, esp. pp. 12-22.
 - 26 Boeijermans' work is likewise kept in the museum, inv. no. 23.
 - 27 The *Justitia* was one of at least three variant versions that Jordaens painted simultaneously, in a commercially oriented effort to provide a choice for the Hulst officials, and obtain a higher price than negotiated beforehand. See De Poorter 2000, esp. pp. 218-221. De Poorter describes the work as a 'patched-up cast off'. See also Vanoppen 2017, pp. 139-140.
 - 28 G. Hoet, *Catalogus of naamlyst van schilderyen met derzelver pryzen*, 2 vols., The Hague 1752, 1, pp. 400-406, sale The Hague (Jacques Jordaans), 22 March 1734.



Detail cat. no. 3

Judith Leyster

Haarlem 1609 – 1660 Heemstede

A Boy Holding Grapes in his Hat

Signed at the extreme left center with monogram, a conjoined JL* which can be seen in the X-ray

Oil on panel

25.4 x 20.9 cm.

Provenance:

Colonel Francis Charteris (1675-1732), Edinburgh

His sale, Edinburgh, 26 June 1732, Lot 5, as Franc Halls, to

Sir Hew (Hugh) Dalrymple, 1st Baronet of North Berwick (1652-1737), Scotland

Sir David Baird (1757-1829), 1st Baronet of Newbyth Scotland

By descent to his nephew, Sir David Baird (1795-1852), 2nd Baronet of Newbyth, Scotland

By descent to his son, Sir David Baird (1832-1913), 3rd Baronet of Newbyth, Scotland

Sale, Amsterdam, Sotheby Mak van Waay (coll. Marie Visscher of Lausanne), 27-30 May 1924, lot 52 (this lot May 27), as Judith Leyster

With Frederick Muller, Amsterdam

John Bilgrey, Forest Hills, New York

His sale, New York, Parke-Bernet Galleries, 2 March 1950, as Judith Leyster, Lot 1, 450 USD, to Scott and Fowles

Richard (Red) Skelton, Los Angeles, 1954/55, donated in 1955 to

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, inv. no. A6714.54-2, as Jan Miense Molenaer. In museum collection, 1955-1977; deaccessioned in 1977, as Judith Leyster.

Sale, Los Angeles, Sotheby's, 7-9 November 1977, Lot 128, as Judith Jansdr. Leyster (5750 USD)

With Ira Spanierman, Inc., New York

Sale, London, Christie's, 31 October 1980, Lot 146 as Judith Jansdr. Leyster (3800 GBP)

Sale, Brussels, Vanderkindere Auctions, 26 April 2022, Lot 163 as attributed to Judith Leyster

With Salomon Lilian Gallery, Amsterdam, April 2022-October 2022

Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire, acquired October 2022

Literature:

G.S. Davies, *Frans Hals*, London 1902, p. 138, ill. no. 52, as Frans Hals

'Recent Acquisitions', in: *Los Angeles County Museum Bulletin of the Art division* 7/3 (summer 1955), pp. 18-19, as Jan Miense Molenaer

F.F. Hofrichter, *Judith Leyster, A Woman Painter in Holland's Golden Age*,

Doornspijk 1989. cat. no. 7



The Painting

This is a cheerful little painting of a grinning boy with a dimpled chin. His gleeful, upward expression and sparkling eyes suggest his impish character. His open mouth reveals a set of baby teeth suggesting his age as only about 5 years old. And so his exuberance is somewhat expected or at least not surprising for a playful young child. The auburn haired boy faces us, and is dressed in an (adult-fashioned) golden-brown jacket with silver buttons on the sleeves and a flat white collar edged in lace. He is shown about half-length with one hand grasping a bunch of green grapes in a large grey, overturned hat. His other hand is hidden, holding the hat from beneath. On the small table is a large tankard of wine.

The tankard looks too large and heavy for the boy to lift. And the hat is too big for him to wear. Yet this is not a painting of careless proportions, but rather these discrepancies are executed with intention. The meaning of the objects and actions will be examined in a later section: *The subject*.

The work is a typical example of *genre* painting from the first third of the seventeenth century. It is an example of the “modern” way of painting ordinary people – not fashionable, wealthy or handsome – but instead one that reveals character with figures pursuing commonplace. *A Boy Holding Grapes in His Hat* probably dates to this period of the early 1630s.

The painting is executed vigorously with visible paint strokes creating his cheeks, chin, hat, collar, and lace and is rendered with subtle grey tones throughout both the background and in the still-life elements. One can appreciate the different textures displayed here – the felt of the hat, the cloth of the jacket, and the shiny, reflective metal of the tankard, which reflects the boy’s elbow.

It is unusual for a seventeenth-century Dutch painting to have a provenance, as this does, that extends to the very early eighteenth century, even possibly to the late seventeenth. Except for commissioned works, and those which have remained in family possessions, such a provenance is rare. This unique

history may be accounted for by the unusual subject matter. That is, paintings listed in inventories as *Boy Laughing*, or *Portrait of a Woman*, can be associated with a multitude of artists and works, but described, in this case, as *A Boy Holding Grapes in his Hat* (or similarly), narrows it down considerably – to one.

The Attribution

From the earliest documentation at the beginning of the eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth, *A Boy Holding Grapes in His Hat* was considered a work by Frans Hals (c.1585-1666). A small painting of a single, half-or bust-length, open-mouthed laughing boy, facing the viewer, could be a description of many of Hals’s roundels. (fig. 1) But the shading and modelling across the Boy’s face, the detailed still-life element of the hat and jug, suggested that it might be by another hand. It was briefly attributed to Judith Leyster (1609-1660), around 1950.¹ But in 1954, prior to its acquisition by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), art historian Wilhelm Valentiner, who was their Consulting Director, changed the attribution to that of another Haarlem artist (later husband of Judith Leyster), Jan Miense Molenaer (c.1610-1668).² And the painting entered the LACMA collection as a work by Molenaer. Soon after, it was seen by art historian S.J. Gudlaugsson, who thought



Fig. 1 Frans Hals, *Laughing Boy*, c. 1625, oil on panel, 30.4 cm. (diam.), The Hague, Mauritshuis



Fig. 2 Judith Leyster, *Young Flute Player*, c. 1635, oil on canvas, 73 x 62 cm., Stockholm, Nationalmuseum

the painting was indeed by Judith Leyster, and the museum changed its attribution.³ I agreed, and in my 1989 monograph on Judith Leyster, I included it as an autograph work.⁴ At that time the location was unknown, as it had been de-accessioned by LACMA in 1977 and had begun a peripatetic journey, until 2022.⁵

That the painting wasn't recognized as hers for about 300 years requires some explanation. Praised in her lifetime, Judith Leyster was considered a significant artist of genre paintings, portraits and still-lives.⁶ But after her death in 1660, her name was missing for the next 250 years and she was only rediscovered at the end of the nineteenth century.⁷ She became lost to history for two probable reasons: she signed her paintings with a monogram which later artists, collectors and historians didn't recognize, and in the post-mortem inventory of her husband's estate (she pre-deceased Molenaer by eight years), her paintings are listed as by "the wife of the deceased" or as by "Mrs. Molenaer." The name Judith Leyster was never mentioned.⁸



Fig. 3 Judith Leyster, *Children with a Cat and a Slow-Worm*, c. 1635, oil on panel, 59.4 x 48.8 cm., London, National Gallery

During this period when her name was not considered, this painting and others by her were linked to the more famous Frans Hals. To pry it away from that attribution meant learning about Leyster's authentic paintings. And if we compare *A Boy Holding Grapes in His Hat* to both her *Young Flute Player* (fig. 2, Stockholm, c. 1635) and her *Children with a Cat and a Slow-Worm* (fig. 3, London, c. 1635), which also include young children, we can see similarities. The faces of each of the three boys (figs. 4-6) are similarly rendered, with deep shadowing on one side. The bones of their fingers are sharply defined. And a section of anatomy that is seen here, and in all three paintings, yet often not noticeable in most Dutch painting (because of hairstyles and hats worn by both men and women) are ears. Because the boys are seen from the front, their ears are not seen completely; one could only see them fully if the heads were in profile. Yet their ears are clearly visible on each of the boys and are remarkably similarly, with one ear appearing severely foreshortened, the other more fully seen. They are a distinctive and somewhat unusual feature. The boys in the London and Stockholm paintings also look to



Fig. 4 Detail of cat. no. 4, boy's head



Fig. 5 Detail of fig. 2, young flute player's head



Fig. 6 Detail of fig. 3, boy's head

the upper left and the X-ray and detail (figs. 7, 8) of *A Boy Holding Grapes in his Hat* suggests that Leyster started with him looking out in that direction, too. Further, the painted grey background of *A Boy Holding Grapes in His Hat* is similar to that seen in the *Young Flute Player*, which is also painted with the suggestion of the play of light on the wall. In the Stockholm painting the presumption of a window on the left explains the sophisticated light effects. There are also musical instruments hanging on that wall, shadows and a nail, all of which create a complete

sense of the background as a physical wall. In *A Boy Holding Grapes in His Hat* there is no such assumed window to provide a strong spatial definition, which suggests this work may date earlier.

The boy seen in the London painting, is about eight or nine years old and may be the same boy as in ours but painted several years later.⁹ Continued contact with this child suggests he may have been a family member. Because the first of Leyster's own children wasn't born until 1637, the model couldn't be one of her own. But she had nieces and nephews from her older siblings, who could have served as models.¹⁰



Fig. 7 X-ray of cat. no. 4



Fig. 8 X-ray of cat. no. 4, detail of boy's head

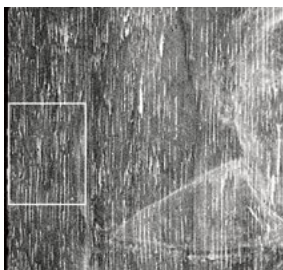


Fig. 9
X-ray of cat. no. 4,
with indication of the
monogram

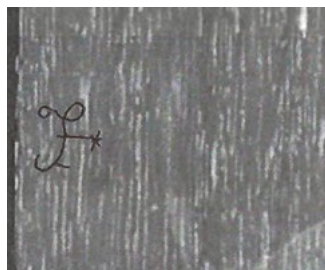


Fig. 10
X-ray of cat. no. 4,
detail of the
monogram, with the author's
outline



Fig. 11
Judith Leyster, monogram from
The Carousing Couple, 1630,
Paris Musée du Louvre

These visual indications for the attribution to Leyster are confirmed by her monogram (Figs. 9, 10), which is seen in X-ray, at the extreme left center of the painting. Although the surface pigment of the monogram is no longer present, a faint residue from it can be discerned in the X-ray. Her monogram, a conjoined J, L (sharing the vertical line of the letters) with a star extending horizontally from the L, is a pun on her name (Leading Star – Pole Star or as we say, North Star). She painted her monogram, as seen in this detail from *The Carousing Couple*, (Fig. 11, Paris, 1630), on several of her works, sometimes with a date and other times without one.¹¹

Biography

Judith Leyster was born in the city of Haarlem and baptized 28th of July 1609.¹² She was the eighth of nine children born to Flemish émigrés, Trijn Jaspersdr and Jan Willemsz; hence she was born Judith Jansdr (Judith, the daughter of Jan). Her father took the name Leyster, before Judith's birth and named his brewery an malthouse with that name.¹³ That business however was not his primary one, which was as a small-ware weaver, thus related to textiles, one of the major industries of Haarlem. But investing in the brewery was overreaching and

left him bankrupt in 1625.¹⁴ Because bankruptcy was considered a significant moral failing in this Calvinist country, her parents left Haarlem and settled in the city of Vreeland, a village in the province of Utrecht.¹⁵ We have no documentation that 16-year-old Judith Leyster accompanied her parents.

As she is mentioned in Samuel Ampzing's *Description of the City of Haarlem* as a noted painter in that city, in 1628, we can assume she remained in Haarlem.¹⁶ The date of that publication suggests that she was already painting and in a workshop for several years, probably since age 11, as was usual.¹⁷ When Ampzing mentioned Leyster, it was in association with another artist, Maria De Grebber (1602-1680), the daughter of a more famous Haarlem artist, Frans de Grebber (1573–c.1649), who had a large family and family workshop.¹⁸ It is likely that Leyster worked with the De Grebber family, but it is also possible that Ampzing linked her to Maria, only because they were both young women.

Although she has been frequently associated with Frans Hals – and many of her paintings (as this one) were once attributed to him – we have no documentation that Leyster worked with or was in the Studio of Frans Hals. Many of her paintings reflect her knowledge of Hals's figure types and quick brushwork, but she seldom painted as loosely or freely. She had several styles, some tighter and more intimate, by lamplight.

Leyster became a member of the Guild of St. Luke of Haarlem (the Painter's Guild) in 1633, and she may have been the first woman painter admitted.¹⁹ As a Master in the Guild she had attained the status as a professional artist and was permitted to sell paintings and earn money by teaching students. We know that she had at least three students, who may have executed the unsigned copies or versions of her popular paintings, and there are no signed independent works by them.²⁰ Although she wasn't a Guild member until 1633, we have signed and dated paintings by her from 1629, 1630, and 1631.²¹ That may have been her most prolific period. *A Boy Holding Grapes in His Hat* was probably painted during this time.

Leyster lived and worked in Haarlem most of her life and in 1636 married fellow Haarlem painter Jan Miense Molenaer and immediately moved to Amsterdam where they remained for the next 12 years.²² In 1648 they moved back to Haarlem and then in the 1650s moved back to Amsterdam. They later returned again to Haarlem and purchased a farm, *Het Lam*, in Heemstede on the outskirts of Haarlem, where she was buried in 1660.²³

Both Molenaer and Leyster continued to paint, no doubt sharing a studio, although there are only a few works by her dated to this later time. They are known to have had five children, but several died quite young and only two survived them. Following the custom of the time, the children's upbringing would have rested with her.²⁴ She is also recorded in notarial documents as having a "ledger," and it is therefore likely that she managed the household, and administered the accounting for both family businesses, which were art and real estate.

Many artists needed additional income because the sale of paintings could not supply a reliable income. This was further exacerbated in Amsterdam where they were not members of that Guild and therefore could not officially sell their paintings or have students. Molenaer's post-mortem inventory suggests that their real estate business (largely from their years in Amsterdam), provided a substantial, well-furnished home for them through their married lives.

Technical Studies

The Salomon Lilian Gallery arranged for *Redivivus* to photograph, clean and examine *Boy with Grapes in His Hat* with X-rays and Infrared Studies. The most significant discovery was Leyster's monogram found in the X-ray (Figs. 9, 10), which confirmed our visual analysis.

In the X-ray, we can also see hints of the initial composition, which changed during the painting process. Although difficult to see here, the boy originally wore a cap tilted to the side, which may have been in several positions (Figs. 7, 8), before

being removed altogether. As mentioned earlier, his eyes were originally looking to the left rather than straight ahead and they still have their initial glint of light, as if he retained the side glance.

These changes were worked out in paint directly on the panel during the painting process. We have no evidence that she started by drawing on paper, although we can assume she did. There are no extant independent drawings, nor preliminary drawings by Leyster for any of her paintings. Yet Dutch artists were encouraged to draw, as instructed by Karel van Mander and the so-called Haarlem Academy of the late 16th century. We have drawings by many Dutch artists (including those of her husband), but there are notable exceptions: Frans Hals and Vermeer. Yet we assume they did draw, as we assume Leyster did, but those sheets were likely destroyed after the paintings were executed.

Technical examination of other paintings by Leyster have also shown changes in composition – some small, such as a leg moved to the side, but other



Fig. 12 J. Sweelinck(?) after Adriaen van de Venne, 'Coat of arms dedicated to all chaste maidens', in: Jacob Cats, *Maechden-plicht*, Middelburg 1618

paintings show multiple changes in costume and sometimes the substitution of entire figures.²⁵ The modifications in costume and placement in *A Boy Holding Grapes in His Hat* were to be expected. These revisions reveal her working method and bring us closer to her thinking process.

The subject

The subject of *A Boy Holding Grapes in his Hat* is unusual and even a bit naughty. We can understand it on the direct level of the grapes associated with the tankard on the table, which pokes fun at adults getting drunk. But art historian Eddy de Jongh, in a lengthy article in 1974, which explored the meaning of a figure holding grapes in seventeenth-century Dutch art, offers a distinctly different concept.²⁶ My interpretation of Leyster's painting extrapolates from his finding, which is based on moralizing emblem books such as Jacob Cats's *Maechden-plicht* (The Maiden's Duty, 1618), which depicts a disembodied hand holding the stem of a bunch of grapes (fig. 12), and above has the motto "Coats of Arms dedicated to all chaste maidens."²⁷ The emblem symbolizes chastity and its vulnerability, with the additional phrases *Una via est*, "There is only one way" (to maintain one's virginity) and that *Eer is teer*, "Honor is fragile."²⁸

De Jongh provides numerous examples of men, women or children in single portraits, family portraits or genre scenes holding grapes by the stem (figs. 13-17). He notes that these "depict the crucial moment when a bunch of grapes is picked up delicately by the stem, without grapes being touched" and that "one touch of the grapes could smudge that virtue."²⁹ The concept of virtue through chastity, he explains, was not just a goal of the unmarried but also of the married, even those with children. We might ask how one can be considered a virgin when shown as a parent with children, but he clarifies that once married, the intimate (sexual) aspect of one's life is also fragile.³⁰ Being monogamous in marriage is therefore prized and extolled in those family portraits as the celebration of the perfect marital relationships. Artists were likely asked by the patrons to be shown this way.³¹

The emblem asserts that to convey virtuousness there is only "One Way" (the *only* way) – to be seen holding grapes by the stem:

*That's the proper way— no other is for you,
If you wish to act as virtuous people do.
That's the proper way to gain your cherished aim,
To take it without stain, to hold it without blame.*³²



Fig. 13 Jurriaen Jacobson, *Michiel Adriaenszoon de Ruyter and His Family*, 1662, oil on canvas, 269 x 406 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 14 Detail of fig. 13, grapes held by stem



Fig. 15 Emanuel de Witte, *Portrait of a Family*, 1678, oil on canvas, 68.5 x 86.5 cm., Munich, Alte Pinakothek



Fig. 16 Detail of fig. 15, grapes held by stem



Fig. 17 Jan Fransz van der Merck, *Portrait of a Woman Holding a Basket of Fruit*, c.1660, oil on panel, 72.7 x 59.3 cm., Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, bequest of Charles Sumner

In *A Boy Holding Grapes in His Hat*, however, there is no delicate lifting of the grapes by the stem, although the stem is clearly displayed. It is purposely shown as available, but the boy grabs the bunch instead. The meaning here is therefore not chastity or virginity, but lust.

The prominently displayed cavernous void of a man's hat, sometimes placed on a vertical bed-pole, can refer to a woman's private parts.³³ And the boy in the painting grabs for the fruit. The wine jug combined with the greedily held grapes (combination of drink and sex) amounts to an even greater sin.

If the boy were a man, this scene, and specifically his gesture, could have been regarded as obscene. It is still lascivious, but he is a child and can do here what would be lewd if a man were depicted doing the same. So, the painting may seem just funny and innocent, only mocking excessive drinking. But the grin of the boy may, however, also suggest he knows his gesture is not altogether innocent.

The blatantly sexual nature of the subject (holding the grapes, but not by the stem) may account for its rarity in Dutch art. It is also tempting to think that the

unusual subject may have been the result of a specific commission. Many paintings by Dutch artists, and some by Leyster herself, pun on sexual relations. Some of these appear equally indecent.³⁴ For example, in Leyster's *A Game of Tric-Trac* (Fig. 18, Worcester Art Museum, MA, c. 1631) the game is one where the reward is the woman and the winner, the man at the left, has his hand on his crotch. In fact, he has one hand on his piece (on the board) and the other on his piece in his pants.³⁵ Such innuendo expressed the new view of the commonplace and ordinary, an aspect of real life. The boy isn't scolding us with some moral judgment but simply confronting the viewer.

This brings us back to the provenance of the painting and the first owner known to us, Colonel Francis Charteris (1675-1732). He was an unusual figure. Notorious for lechery, debauchery, and depravity, he was tried and found guilty of rape, although he was reputed to have committed this crime often before.³⁶ He was referred to as the "Rape-Master General."³⁷ His trial for the rape of his servant Ann Bond was "one of the most famous criminal cases of the century."³⁸ He was infamous for the entrapment of poor and vulnerable women, for cheating at gambling, for bribing political officials, and for his excessive wealth, a combination that made him despised by all classes.³⁹



Fig. 18
Judith Leyster, *A Game of Tric-Trac*,
c.1631, oil on panel, 62.2 x 40.6
cm., Worcester (MA), Worcester Art
Museum



Fig. 19 William Hogarth, *A Harlot's Progress*, 1732,
etching and engraving, 31.3 x 38.4 cm., New York,
Metropolitan Museum of Art

With his notoriety as a nefarious villain, he was the subject of contemporary literary allusions and correspondence between Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope.⁴⁰ And William Hogarth, in his *A Harlot's Progress*, plate I (Fig. 19), of 1732, executed two years after his rape trial, included Charteris's recognizable image at the doorway of the brothel, welcoming Moll Hackabout.⁴¹ And the Madam of the brothel, Mrs. Needham, who is welcoming Moll, was also known to be Charteris's main procuress.⁴² Another print from the same time (Fig. 20) is a half-length profile portrait of Charteris, standing in a court docket, with his thumbs tied. It includes a tongue-in-cheek poem, which provides an even fuller sense of his infamy:

*Blood! must a Colonel with a Lords Estate
Be thus obnoxious to a Scoundrel's fate?
Brought to the Bar, & Sentenc'd from ye Bench
For only Ravishing a Country Wench?
Shall Gentlemen receive no more respect?
Shall their Diversions thus by Laws be check'd?
Shall they b'accountable to Saucy Juries,
For this or t'other pleasure? - H-H & Furies!
What man thro' Villainy would run a Course,
And ruin Families without remorse
To heap up Riches - if when all is done
An ignominious Death he cannot Shun?*⁴³



Fig. 20 George White, *Colonel Francisco* (Francis Charteris), c.1730, mezzotint, 33.7 x 23.8 cm., London, British Museum

Although Colonel Charteris, who had a vast art collection, was not the first owner of *A Boy Holding Grapes in His Hat*, his possession of the painting was early enough in its history, whether acquired in the late seventeenth century or early eighteenth, that it is likely that the lascivious meaning of the painting would have been relished by him.⁴⁴ But this is only one way to understand and appreciate the painting. It



Fig. 21 Red Skelton

doesn't discount the humor in just ridiculing drunken grown-ups.

The 1950s American television comedian Richard (Red) Skelton (Fig. 21), who owned the painting from about 1950-55, and who painted images of red-headed clowns, may have enjoyed the painting for the Boy's resemblance to him.⁴⁵

Every owner in each generation may have seen something different in this small work. There are only a few elements in the painting, but they are laden with meaning. The lively face of this unusual little fellow, the freshness and care taken in rendering his face, shadows and hand, the sharp still-life elements and the huge hat and tankard, can only bring a smile. And then we can consider the grapes.

FFH

Notes

- 1 See provenance: New York, Parke-Bernet Galleries, 2 March 1950, Lot 1, as Judith Leyster. It is unknown who made that attribution.
- 2 Documents at LACMA indicate that the painting was appraised by Valentiner as by Jan Miense Molenaer in 1954 and entered the collection with that attribution in 1955.
- 3 As noted by Burton Fredericksen in 1973 (no exact date) in LACMA records it was Gudlaugsson (no date was given) who changed the attribution to Judith Leyster, and Fredericksen noted that he agreed.
- 4 Hofrichter 1989, cat. no. 7.
- 5 See Provenance above.
- 6 She is mentioned in two contemporary publications on the city of Haarlem: by Samuel Ampzing, *Beschryvinge ende Lof der Stad Haerlem in Holland*, Haarlem 1628 (Reprint, 1974), p. 370 (Description of the City of Haarlem), 1628 and by Theodore Schrevel, *Harlemias*, Haarlem 1754, from Dutch edition, 1648, p. 445 (the Latin edition is 1647, p. 292.)
- 7 She was re-discovered by the art historian Cornelis Hofstede de Groot in 1892 following the misattribution of her painting *The Carousing Couple*, 1630 (now at the Musée du Louvre) to Frans Hals. For more information about this finding and related court case see F.F. Hofrichter, 'A Fresh Look at an Old Case: The Discovery of Judith Leyster', in: C. Dumas, R.E.O. Ekkart, C. van de Puttelaar (eds.), *Connoisseurship : essays in honour of Fred G. Meijer*, Leiden 2020, pp. 171-174.
- 8 Hofrichter 1989, pp. 87-103 for the inventory; 29-34 for her loss to history. For a more extensive discussion of her loss and reputation, see F.F. Hofrichter, 'Eclipse of a Leading Star', in: J. Welu, P. Biesboer (eds.), *Judith Leyster : A Dutch Master and Her World*, exh. cat. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum, Worcester, Worcester Art Museum 1993, pp. 115-121.
- 9 I would like to thank Jasper Hillegers for suggesting this to me.
- 10 See genealogical tree in E. Broerson, 'Judith Leyster: A Painter of Good, Keen Sense', in Haarlem/Worcester 1993, p. 18. See Broerson for detailed information on her life, family and related documents.
- 11 Among her paintings, monogrammed but undated, are *The Young Flute Player* (Stockholm), *The Last Drop* (Philadelphia), the *Still Life with Fruit* (Kremer Collection).
- 12 Hofrichter 1989, pp. 17-19; Broersen 1993, pp. 18, 23. Leyster's own family planning mirrored her mother's and this is discussed in F.F. Hofrichter, 'An Intimate Look at Baroque Women Artists: Births, Babies and Biography', in: R. Voaden, D. Wolfthal (eds.), *Framing the Family: Narrative and Representation in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods*, pp. 139-160, Tempe 2005.
- 13 Hofrichter 1989, p. 13; Broersen 1993, p. 15. Taking one's name from one's house or business was quite common. As the name Leyster is used by him as early as 1603, before he bought the brewery, Broersen suggests that he may have wanted to pun on the French (he was after all Flemish), *toile* for linen and *étoile* for star, to pay tribute to his primary linen business.
- 14 Hofrichter 1989, pp. 14-15; Broersen 1993, p. 17.
- 15 Hofrichter 1989, p. 14; Broersen 1993, p. 19.
- 16 See Ampzing 1628.
- 17 Broersen 1993, p. 19, indicates the age of 11 is when a student would enter a workshop.
- 18 From Ampzing 1628, p. 370.
Frans Now I have to mention Grebber.
Grebber, The father, and the son and the daughter I
 have to praise
with his Who ever saw a painting by the hand of a
 daughter?
Son Pieter *See here is someone else who paints with a
 good keen sense.
And The Grebbers are well-known for their big
 pictures (portraits)
Daughter Who saw somebody's hand and mind playing
 here in a bold way a bolder
Maria.
*Judith Leyster
- 19 Hofrichter 1989, p. 15, where I state she was the first woman painter in the guild. But in Haarlem/Worcester 1993, p. 120, note 4, I indicate that as Sara van Baalbergen was listed as a painter and Guild Member in 1631 (H. Miedema, *De archiefbescheiden van het st. Lukasgilde te Haarlem: 1497-1798*, 2 vols, Alphen aan de Rijn 1980, II, pp. 421, 1039.), thus Leyster may not have been the first. Yet Anna Tummers, *Judith Leyster, 1609-1660, the First Woman to Become a Master Painter*, exh. cat. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum 2009, indicates (p. 5, note 1) that Sara van Baalbergen, despite being listed as a painter, may have been a tapestry or embroidery designer and that – as the very title of the exhibition and catalogue state – she believes that Leyster was the first. She notes that Sara van Baalbergen was not mentioned by Ampzing or Schrevel in their histories of Haarlem painters (see note 6). See also Broersen 1993, p. 20. For more information on her entrance into the Guild and her *Self-Portrait* (NGA, DC) as her gift to the Guild, see F.F. Hofrichter, 'Judith Leyster's *Self-Portrait: Ut Pictura Poesis*', in A.-M. Logan (ed.), *Essays in Northern European Art : presented to Egbert Haverkamp Begemann on his Sixtieth Birthday*, Doornspijk 1983, pp. 106-109.
- 20 Hofrichter 1989, p. 82; Broersen 1993, p. 20.
- 21 Paintings dated 1629: *The Serenade*, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; *The Jolly Toper/Peeckelheering* (Frans Hals

- Museum, Haarlem. Dated 1630: *The Carousing Couple*, Musée du Louvre, Paris. Dated 1631: *The Proposition*, Mauritshuis, The Hague.
- 22 Hofrichter 1989, p. 16; Broersen 1993, p. 21. The attraction of Amsterdam, a city that had a wealthier clientele, invited the possibility of commissions, although as neither was member of the Amsterdam Guild of St. Luke their art business was limited, but they also had significant real estate dealings there.
 - 23 Hofrichter 1989, pp. 20, 84, Doc. 40 with the invitation to her interment, 10 February 1660. Broersen 1993, p. 30, also suggests that the grave was rented.
 - 24 For the role of wives and as mothers, see: W.E. Franits, *Paragons of Virtue : Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art.*, Cambridge 1993, pp. 66-73, 95-101, 111-160; K.A. McIver, 'Material Culture: Consumption, Collecting and Domestic Goods' in: A.M. Poska, J. Couchman, K.A. McIver (eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, Ashgate 2013, pp. 472-477; L. Warner, 'Before the Law', in: Ashgate 2013, pp. 237-240; M. Ajmar-Wollheim 'Housework', in: M. Ajmar-Wollheim, F. Dennis (eds.), *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, exh. cat. London, Victoria and Albert Museum 2006-2007, pp. 151-163.
 - 25 For example, In her *Self-Portrait* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, c. 1633), she changed the painting on her easel from that of a girl to a fiddler which is a detail of her *Merry Company*; in *Children with a Cat and a Slow-Worm* (National Gallery, London, c. 1635), the cat was placed in at least into 4 prior locations and the ruff that the girl wears was once a scarf, the end of which she held in her left hand, which now holds the cat's tail; the leg of the most left man in *A Game of Tric-Trac* (Worcester Art Museum, c.1631), was in slightly different position.
 - 26 E. de Jongh, 'Grape Symbolism in Paintings of the 16th and 17th Centuries', in: *Simiolus* 7 (1974), pp. 166-191. As noted in the text, my interpretation is extrapolated from his and the images (figs. 17-21) are ones he uses.
 - 27 De Jongh 1974, p. 166.
 - 28 De Jongh 1974, p. 166.
 - 29 De Jongh 1974, pp. 170, 174 interpreting Jacob Cats.
 - 30 De Jongh 1974, p. 175 provides several examples from Cats and other sources: "For she who gives herself in pure love without stain / May be a wife – a mother! – and virgin yet remain." De Jongh notes this is possibly from John Chrysostom "marriage is a second sort of virginity; that is, when the same is undergone virtuously between man and wife," or that it is from John Calvin.
 - 31 De Jongh 1974, p. 173.
 - 32 De Jongh 1974, p. 174.
 - 33 Some examples of the presentation of the hollow of a man's hat can be seen in Gerard Ter Borch's *The Suitor's Visit* (NGA, DC), c. 1658 and in Jan Miense Molenaer's *Lovers in a Bedroom* (location unknown – see cat. 34, fig. 2 in D. Weller, *Jan Miense Molenaer : Painter of the Dutch Golden Age*, exh. cat. Raleigh, North Carolina Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Manchester (NH), Currier Museum of Art 2002-2003) c. 1650-53.
 - 34 In paintings such as Jan Steen's *Beware of Luxury* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), 1663, among many others, the sexual innuendo abounds: the central man whose legs are spread apart has swung one leg over the woman's leg next to him; she holds a wine jug in one hand and in the other holds a filled wine glass directly in front of his crotch. Paintings by the Utrecht Caravaggisti, in the early 1620s, Gerrit van Honthorst, Hendrick Ter Brugghen and Dirck van Baburen, each executed half-length and nearly life-size paintings of prostitutes and their madams. For more on such imagery see, L. van de Pol, *The Burgher and the Whore : Prostitution in Early Modern Amsterdam*, Oxford 2011. Surely the men and women of the seventeenth century knew what these paintings meant and enjoyed and appreciated the humor.
 - 35 F.F. Hofrichter, 'Games People Play: Judith Leyster's *A Game of Tric-Trac*' in: *Worcester Art Museum Journal* 7 (1983-84), pp. 19-27.
 - 36 A.E. Simpson, 'Popular Perceptions of Rape as a Capital Crime in Eighteenth-Century England: The Press and the Trial of Francis Charteris in the Old Bailey, February 1730', in: *Law and History Review* 22 (2004), p. 30. For a full discussion of the trial and his reputation, see pp. 27-70. Both The British Museum <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG132446> and the National Galleries of Scotland (<https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/26547/colonel-francis-charteris-1675-1732-gambler-and-criminal>) offer a simple biography of Charteris: "*Gambler and criminal.*"
 - 37 Simpson 2004, p. 41.
 - 38 Simpson 2004, p. 30.
 - 39 Simpson 2004, p. 39.
 - 40 Simpson 2004, pp. 30, 38-39 and note 39.
 - 41 Simpson 2004, p. 30. The Metropolitan Museum of Art which owns the print, *A Harlot's Progress* by William Hogarth, indicates a "lecherous old gentleman (Colonel Charteris) eyes the girl with anticipation."
 - 42 Simpson 2004, p. 30.
 - 43 George White (1684-1732), *Colonel Francesco*, c.1730, mezzotint. Text on the print can be seen here https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1874-0808-1349
 - 44 According to Simpson 2004, p. 34, Charteris amassed great wealth and didn't lose it despite his trial and conviction. The sale catalogue of 26 June 1732 (in which our painting was number 5) included an additional 139 lots from his collection of mostly Dutch and Italian

paintings. In addition, another 60 lots (with many lots of multiple paintings each) of his collection were sold on the 1st and 2nd of that same month.

- 45 The website <http://redskelton-gallery.com/> and The Red Skelton Museum of American Comedy in Vincennes, Indiana (<https://www.redskelton.com/museum>), are dedicated to his paintings and those images of Skelton in his various television personalities. According to LACMA files, when Skelton donated the painting, he also donated a 16th C Flemish tapestry and a 15th C Spanish painting.

cat. no. 5

Jan Havicksz Steen

1626 – Leiden – 1679

Erysichthon Selling his Daughter Mestra

Signed lower right: JSteen (JS in ligature)

Oil on panel

34 x 29 cm.

Unidentified inventory number '100' in white, lower right

Provenance:

Amsterdam (?), collection d'Ablaing van Giessenburg family¹

The Hague, collection Coenraet baron Droste (1642-1734)

His sale, The Hague, 21 July 1734, lot 39²

Amsterdam / The Hague, collection Gerard II Bicker van Swieten (1687-1753)

His sale, The Hague, 12 April 1741, lot 215³

Russia, collection Golitsyn family, 19th century⁴

Germany, private collection, until 2023

Literature:

G. Hoet, *Catalogus of naamlyst van schilderyen met derzelver pryzen*, 2 vols., The Hague 1752, 1, p. 425, lot 39 (Droste sale); 2, p. 27, lot 207 (Bicker van Swieten sale)

T. van Westrheene, *Jan Steen : étude sur l'art en Hollande*, The Hague 1856, p. 164, cat. no. 409

C. Hofstede de Groot, *Beschreibendes und kritisches Verzeichnis der Werke des hervorragendsten holländischen Maler des XVII. Jahrhunderts*, 10 vols., Esslingen 1907-1928, 1 (1907), p. 19, under cat. no. 73 (present provenance mistakenly given to cat. no. 73) (English ed., 1908, p. 27, under cat. no. 73, idem.)

B.D. Kirschenbaum, *The religious and historical paintings of Jan Steen*, New York 1977, pp. 140-141, under cat. no. 72 (present provenance mistakenly given to cat. no. 72)

K. Braun, *Alle tot nu toe bekende schilderijen van Jan Steen*, Rotterdam 1980, p. 122, under cat. no. A-258 (present provenance mistakenly given to cat. no. A-258)

Jan Steen

Jan Havicksz Steen was born in Leiden in 1626. He was the son of the Catholic beer brewer Havick Jansz Steen (1602-1670) and his wife Elisabeth Capiteyn (d. 1669).⁵ The relative prosperity of his family allowed Steen to attend the Latin school and in 1646, aged twenty, he subscribed to the Leiden University.

Already in 1648, however, Steen left the university without a degree to become a master of the Leiden Guild of Saint Luke, implying that he was trained as a painter before that time. According to Steen's earliest biographer Arnold Houbraken he studied with Jan van Goyen (1596-1656) in The Hague. Jacob Campo Weyerman adds that the painters Nicolaus Knupfer



(1603-1655) in Utrecht and Adriaen van Ostade (1610-1684) in Haarlem were his teachers, respectively. Since Steen married Van Goyen's daughter Margriet in 1649 – thus after becoming a master painter – it seems likely that while in the Van Goyen workshop he didn't merely function as a pupil, but rather as the older master's assistant. Steen, although paying his yearly contribution to the Leiden Guild of Saint Luke, stayed at least six years in The Hague. In 1654 he moved to Delft, where his father leased a brewery for him. After 1657, however, Steen seems to have left the brewery business and headed back to Leiden, where he again paid contribution to the Guild in 1658. That same year he left town, probably to nearby Warmond, where he is documented in 1660. This sojourn was again short-lived, for in August 1660 a son Havick was baptised in Haarlem, where Steen joined the guild in 1661. The following years turned out to be his most productive. After the death of his wife Margriet in 1669, Steen moved back permanently to his native Leiden in 1670. His function as foreman and dean of the guild testifies to his privileged status in the last decade of his life. Steen's unique narrative talents, his witty, satirical social comment, his idiosyncratic style and technical mastery make him one of the quintessential painters of the Golden Age.

A newly discovered painting of a man who sells his daughter for bread

The present, newly discovered work by Jan Steen is a gem-like addition to his known oeuvre, which is estimated to number around 450 paintings. Of these, about 75 are history paintings – works depicting stories from the bible, history, literary sources and mythology – the category to which our work belongs.⁶ An unknown history painting by Steen surfacing is an extremely rare occasion. It last happened in 1987 and 1988, when *The Mocking of Ceres*, now in a private collection and *Bathsheba After the Bath*, in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, appeared in auction. While the composition of the *Bathsheba* had been known through the existence of an old copy, the *Ceres* had only been noted in old auction catalogues (lastly in 1838).⁷ As it turns out, the present work was likewise recorded in the

eighteenth century (see Provenance and below), but in this specific case these early entries have until now mistakenly been connected with another painting, a work to be discussed below. This longstanding error is resolved here.

Painted with arresting care for detail and narrative invention, the scene depicted on our small panel seems a rather peculiar one. On the doorstep of a shed, and situated against a forest landscape background, a rough bearded, sullen man in an open blue jacket receives money from another man, who wears a strange fur hat and fanciful clothes, and has a big purse hanging around his waist. A boy with a blue hat stands next to them, and holds an empty basket in his hand, presumably just until then filled with the loafs of bread now laying in the foreground. A young girl in a dishevelled dress with one breast naked, held by her hand by the bearded man, is weeping inconsolably. Somehow, she, too, seems part of the curious transaction. What is going on here?

Apparently, the painting's strange subject was forgotten early on. The work's earliest recorded appearance is in the deceased sale of the collection of the wealthy poet and art collector Coenraet Droste (1642-1734), held in The Hague in July 1734, where it is listed as lot 39, with measurements, but without determining description. Seven years later the painting is auctioned again, now part of the fabulous collection of the Amsterdam regent Gerard Bicker van Swieten (1687-1753). This time, the work is described as '207. Een Man die zyn Dogter verkoopt voor brood h. 13 d. br. 11 d. door denzelve [Jan Steen] 60- 0' ('A Man who sells his Daughter for bread [...] by the same'). Since the early twentieth century these entries were connected with a painting by Steen in the Rijksmuseum, which depicts the mythological fable of Erysichthon and his daughter Mestra (fig. 1), a rarely encountered subject, that Steen – until now – was thought to have depicted only once.⁸ However, the measurements given in both the Droste and the Bicker van Swieten sale catalogues (13 x 11 inch = c. 33 x c. 28 cm.) rule out the possibility that it could concern the large Rijksmuseum canvas,



Fig. 1 Jan Steen, *Erysichthon Selling his Daughter Mestra*, c. 1665, oil on canvas, 66 x 64 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

which measures 66 x 64 cm. Instead, they perfectly align with our much smaller panel, that with measurements 34 x 29 cm. must clearly be the work listed in both sales.

Mestra and Erysichthon, an Ovidian tale of sacrilege, looming slavery and shape-shifting deceit

A curious case of sacrilege and shift-shaping, the story of Mestra and her father Erysichthon is recounted by Hesiod (c. 750-650 BC)⁹, yet best known in the version recorded by Ovid (43 BC-17 AD) in his *Metamorphoses*, also called ‘The Painters’ Bible’ by Karel van Mander (1548-1606) in his *Wtleggingh* (Explanation on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*).¹⁰ Steen was no doubt familiar with Ovid’s text, which he could either have read in Latin or in Dutch as it was available in translation, and with Van Mander’s comments.¹¹ In the *Metamorphoses*’ eighth book we read how the Greek hero Theseus and his companions, on their way back to Athens following the infamous Calydonian boar hunt, were interrupted by the river Acheloüs having burst its banks following heavy rain. The river’s eponymous river god offered the travellers his house and hospitality, and in his moist atrium a banquet was served. Whereas Ovidian

themes are rare among Steen’s history paintings – he only painted a handful – he depicted this impromptu banquet, as one of the few Northern Netherlandish artists to do so, in a painting datable to around 1660 now in Phoenix (fig. 2).¹² As everyone enjoyed the food and the wine, Acheloüs entertained his guests with stories, one of them about Mestra (book 8, 738-877).

Mestra was the daughter of the rich, sacrilegious miser Erysichthon ‘a man scornful of the gods, who burnt no incense on their altars’.¹³ Erysichthon once violated with his axe a grove sacred to Ceres, the goddess of agriculture and grain. Even for a magnificent holy oak, beneath which the Dryads – tree nymphs – held their festive dances, he would not hold back his disdainful blade. While blood poured out of its damaged bark, the dying tree’s Dryad last outcry was that “punishment will follow blood!” Erysichthon remained unimpressed, but the Dryad’s horrified sisters went to Ceres, begging her for revenge. Infuriated, she immediately sent a messenger to Famine, ordering her to strike Erysichthon with boundless hunger. Thus, Famine travelled to the sleeping sinner ‘and breathed herself into him, covering his throat, and chest, and lips, with her exhalations, causing a lack of nourishment in his hollow veins.’

Erysichthon’s hunger was endless. The more he ate, the greater his desire. His wealth consumed yet his appetite still unappeased, he soon had nothing left. Destitute, he sold his only daughter Mestra, undeserving of such a father. As her buyer took her to the beach, she ran to the shore and shouted out to Neptune: “You god, who stole away the prize of my virginity” (indeed Neptune had taken it) “save me from slavery!” The sea god immediately conceded and turned Mestra into a fisherman. The girl’s buyer looked around puzzled and asked: “You angler, who hides a bronze hook in a little bait, may you have calm sea, and gullible fish, that feel nothing of the hook until they bite. Tell me where she is, the girl with shabby clothes and straggling hair, who stood here on this beach a moment ago!” Mestra – in the guise of the fisherman – replied to him: “Forgive me,



Fig. 2 Jan Steen, *The Banquet of Acheloüs with Theseus, Lelex and Pirithous*, c. 1660, oil on panel, 36 x 46.5 cm., Phoenix, Phoenix Art Museum

whoever you are: no man has been on this beach, except myself, for a long time, and no woman either.” After which the outplayed man backed off, and her true shape was restored. When Erysichthon realised that Mestra could change shape, he often sold her to others. That way she repeatedly obtained her price, dishonestly, for her gluttonous father, escaping her buyers minutes later in the form of a mare, or a bird, a heifer or a hind. In the end though, cursed and hungry Erysichthon tore his limbs apart ‘and fed his miserable body by eating it.’

The painting

Following this outrageous tale Acheloüs and his guests talked some more about shape-shifting (and Acheloüs’ own abilities in that field) until it was time for Theseus and his entourage to head back to Athens. Likewise, let us return to Steen’s painting. Steen, we recognise, depicted the moment of transaction

between the buyer and Erysichthon at his doorstep, who is about to hand over the sobbing Mestra. The firm loafs of bread in the foreground must be part of the trade-off, but their presence seems redundant with the financial transaction that simultaneously takes place. Steen will surely have looked at the sparse depictions of the subject, straightforward prints which invariably show the financial exchange, either with or without Mestra present (figs. 3-6). Food, though, is conspicuously absent from these earlier renderings, but with good reason Steen felt it to be a quintessential narrative element to the fable, as he included it prominently in both the Rijksmuseum painting and the present work.¹⁴

Other elements remain more oblique. Ovid does not mention an assistant to Mestra’s buyer, but in our painting the boy with his basket is an integral part of the scene.¹⁵ As more often, Steen seems to

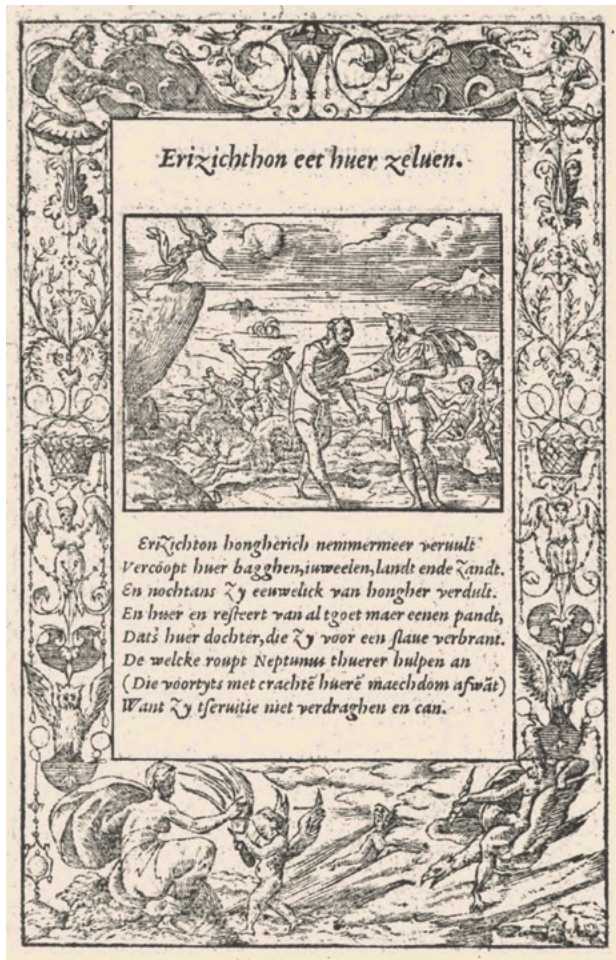


Fig. 3 Bernard Salomon, *Erysichthon Selling his Daughter Mestra*, woodcut, in: Guillaume Borluit, *Excellente figueren ghesneden vuyten vppersten poëte Ovidius vuyt vyfthien boucken der veranderinghen met huerlier bedietsele*, Lyon 1557 (illustrated Dutch edition of the *Metamorphoses*)

have taken inspiration from prints by Rembrandt (1606-1669).¹⁶ Two of these, the strongly related *Rat-Catcher* (1632) and *Beggars Receiving Alms at the Door* (1648) depict genre scenes concerning transactions on the doorstep. In the first, a man in a doorway dismisses a pedlar and his young assistant, who, in analogy with the present boy, stands in between these men while carrying a box. Seen in reverse, the print's visual alignment with Steen's painting, not only in the grouping of the figures, but also in the action taking place being directed towards one side of the picture plane, is striking (fig. 7). Just as Steen's buyer, Rembrandt's rat-catcher wears a grotesque fur hat, and although clearly a shabbier character, he likewise carries a firm purse around his waist.¹⁷



Fig. 5 Antonio Tempesta, *Erysichthon Selling his Daughter Mestra*, 1606, etching, 10.4 x 11.7 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 4 Crispijn van de Passe, *Erysichthon Visited by Famine and Selling his Daughter Mestra*, 1602/07, engraving, 8.6 x 13 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 6 Johann Wilhelm Baur, *Erysichthon Selling his Daughter Mestra*, 1641, etching, 13 x 20.7 cm., London, British Museum



Fig. 7 Rembrandt, *The Rat-Catcher*, 1632, etching, 14 x 12.5 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (image reversed)



Fig. 8 Rembrandt, *Beggars Receiving Alms at the Door*, 1648, etching, 16.6 x 12.9 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (image reversed)

The second etching, touching more explicitly on poverty, shows a pecuniary transaction similar to that in our painting (fig. 8).¹⁸ Steen was certainly aware of this etching, which he employed for his famous *Burgher of Delft* of 1655, a painting that likewise centres around a doorstep transaction between two adults, with a boy in between them and a girl to the side, and shows – in reverse – unexpected affinity with our painting (fig. 9).¹⁹ A third Rembrandt etching that resonates in our painting is his *Dismissal of Hagar* of 1637 (fig. 10), which Steen, as has been pointed out, harvested for his own rendition of the subject, the painting now in Dresden, and datable to c. 1662 (fig. 11).²⁰ A thematically related Old Testament subject involving a man and a crying woman having to leave the household involuntarily, Abraham is seen parting from the tearful Hagar and their son Ismael, while standing at his doorstep in a pose that is (again in reverse) surprisingly similar to Erysichthon's (figs. 12, 13). Steen's explicit indebtedness to this theme is evidenced once more by an engraving of the same



Fig. 9 Jan Steen, *A Burgomaster of Delft*, 1655, oil on canvas, 82.5 x 68.5 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (image reversed)



Fig. 10 J Rembrandt, *The Dismissal of Hagar*, 1637, etching and dry point, 12.6 x 9.5 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 12 Detail of fig. 10, Abraham (image reversed)



Fig. 13 Detail of cat. no. 5, Erysichthon

subject by Rembrandt's and Steen's famous Leiden predecessor (and hero) Lucas van Leyden (1494-1533) (fig. 14). From her sad, upward gaze and her hand sweeping her tears, to the position and shape of her feet, Steen based his *Mestra* directly on Lucas's *Hagar* (figs. 15, 16).²¹



Fig. 11 Jan Steen, *The Dismissal of Hagar*, c. 1662, oil on canvas, 136 x 109 cm., Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister

Yet whereas the intense drama in Rembrandt's and Lucas's *Dismissal of Hagar* prints is palpable, we might call into question the nature of Steen's depiction. Which sale of *Mestra* are we actually witnessing? The first? If so, *Mestra*'s tears of despair are genuine, for in addition to the shivering realisation that her own father is selling her, she is about to be enslaved to a stranger. Unaware yet of the divine gift – shift-shaping – that Neptune has in store for her, this is a terrifying prospect. Yet, if on the other hand this is rather one of the many subsequent sales, the situation is entirely different. Once father and daughter realise the opportunities that *Mestra*'s new talent offers, the subsequent sales take on the form of theatrical melodrama, with corresponding crocodile tears! After all, mere minutes after the emotional transaction *Mestra* will simply shift-shape and return to her father for another performance. Ovid cleverly underlines deceit as central to the story, when he elaborates on the nature of the fisherman, who hides a hook in his bait, and thus deceives the 'gullible fish [...]



Fig. 14 Lucas van Leyden, *The Dismissal of Hagar*, 1516, engraving, 14.8 x 12.3 cm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 15 Detail of fig. 14 Hagar (image reversed)

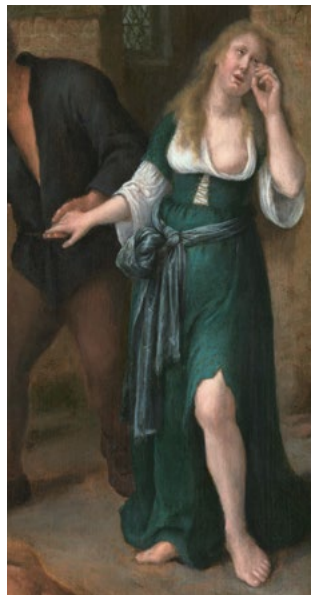


Fig. 16 Detail of cat. no. 5, Mestra

until they bite'. Indeed, Steen not only alludes to the unsavoury buyer's susceptibility – he thinks he is buying a bare-breasted girl but ends up empty-handed – by depicting him in a theatrical costume, he also references Mestra's deceit by depicting the angler, sitting at the shore with his fishing rod. The same character likewise appears at the right in the larger Rijksmuseum painting (figs. 17, 18). Still, Mestra's deceit results from her loyalty. Absent from Ovid's narrative but present in both of Steen's paintings is the dog. While its inclusion may well reference Mestra's many animal transformations, the fact that the dog wears a clearly visible collar will surely allude to the daughter's faithfulness towards her father's case, despite his appalling behaviour. Referencing Erysichthon's initial offense – the cause of his misery – Steen painted the cut-down oak in the middle background.

What, lastly, can be said about the Hollyhock, or Mallow, the plant with the white flowers depicted so prominently in the left foreground? Is it simply a pretty *repoussoir* for the composition? Probably not. The plant's Dutch seventeenth century name was *Maluwe*, and one is instructed about its medicinal use in several medical handbooks popular at the time, such as *Den schat der armen oft een medecijn-boeckken* from 1626, in which the author states that leaves of *Maluwe* (mixed with water, egg yolk and some violet oil) are 'well used for an enema, when experiencing intestinal pain.'²² Similarly, the Dutch doctor Johan van Beverwijck (1594-1647) discusses the plant's effects in his often-reprinted *Schat der gesontheit* (1636), offering several classical authors' opinions. Cicero (106-43 BC), he says, complained that *Maluwe* gave him 'den loop' (diarrhoea). Horace (65-8 BC) praised the plant 'saying that *Maluwe* is of service and healthy to the bloated, constipated, or heavy body' and the antique doctor Galen (129-216 AD) noticed that its sap 'makes the stomach weak, and gives easy bowel movement'.²³ Finally, Beverwijck quotes a satirical epigram by the Roman poet Martialis (c. 40-104 AD):

*'Add Maluwe and lettuce to your dish / That will cause a rapid squish / Never forget it, it's an old rut / For as your posture betrays, you have a bloated gut.'*²⁴



Fig. 17 Detail of cat. no. 5, the fisherman



Fig. 18 Detail of fig. 1, fisherman

The plant, in short, was well-known to be a laxative, and Steen's choice to include it so prominently in his depiction of this fable about a man who eats exorbitantly must surely be understood as fecal mockery. As such, and in keeping with our general understanding of Steen as a painter of the comic mode, it confirms Steen's specific angle. A strange and unusual subject choice to begin with – typically Steen – he highlighted those aspects that he recognised as humorous. Whereas Van Mander in his *Wyleggingh* confined himself to the story's moral warnings by addressing Erysichthon's gluttony, his intemperate greed and his sacrilege, and while the existing pictorial tradition merely provided lacklustre imagery, Steen took an original approach and focused on the comedy of Erysichthon's hysterical food consumption (the unloaded basket with huge breads), mocking its gastroenterological consequences (the laxative reference) and giving centre stage to the deceit (the crocodile tears, the shift-shaped fisherman and the misled buyer). He did so, among others, by infusing his history with genre imagery.

Humour cannot exist without a moral counterweight. After all, the idea that what goes around comes around is fundamentally at the base of the present narrative. It goes for the unsympathetic Erysichthon, who is gruesomely punished for his sacrilege, and

it applies to Mestra's unscrupulous buyers, who end up empty handed. Such duality fits in neatly with what Mariët Westermann, when discussing Steen's historical output, has described as 'history as tragicomedy'.²⁵ In the end, it all comes down to communicating emotions and superior storytelling, Steen's most outstanding quality. Beyond the mockery, our painting also centers around Mestra's compassion, another of the fable's key elements. Despite her father's ruinous gluttony and his maltreatment of her, she supports him in his self-inflicted misery, even if it means she will have to pull a scam for it, over and over again. Yet rather than a victim, Mestra is really the hero of this dark comedy. While she, without any wrongdoing, faces terrible misfortune – rape, a despicable father, deep poverty, and looming enslavement – she refuses to give in. She proactively demands her payback from Neptune when push comes to shove, and chooses to save the day, to give her performance, employ her divine talent, help her cursed father and cleverly lead her buyers astray.

Dating

With only about 45 dated paintings (c. 10% of his oeuvre) the chronology of Jan Steen's work from his earliest output in the late 1640s to his death in 1679 is a notoriously complicated affair.²⁶ A point in case is the Rijksmuseum *Erysichthon*, which

has been variously dated between c. 1655 until the late 1670s, most recently around 1665-1667.²⁷ Dendrochronological research has provided a plausible date for the creation of the present painting from 1640 upwards.²⁸ Essentially a *terminus post quem* and thus not a valid argument against a later date, the idea of a relatively early dating (Steen's earliest works date from the later 1640s) aligns with the art historical context provided above. However, our painting's neat execution and refined technique do not seem to match Steen's earliest phase. Steen's active involvement with Rembrandt's doorstep etchings took place between 1655, the year Steen painted his *Burgher of Delft* and c. 1662, the proposed date of *The Dismissal of Hagar*, for which Steen likewise looked at Lucas van Leyden's *Hagar* engraving, as demonstrated the basis for the figure of Mestra. Moreover, the present painting's composition remains closer to the subject's then-existent pictorial tradition than the Rijksmuseum work, which tentatively suggests a preceding, rather than a subsequent effort. Then again, Steen expert Wouter Kloek has alertly pointed out the strong parallels between Mestra and the figure of Tobias in Steen's *Marriage of Tobias and Sarah* in San Francisco, datable to c. 1671-1673 (fig. 19).²⁹ While a later dating cannot be ruled out, an earlier dating c. 1655-1662, following the arguments presented, seems plausible.

JH



Fig. 19 Jan Steen, *The Marriage of Tobias and Sarah*, c. 1671-1673, oil on canvas, 104.1 x 127.6 cm., San Francisco, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Legion of Honour, detail of Tobias

Notes

- 1 The d'Ablaing van Giessenburg provenance follows from the black wax seal with the family's coat of arms on the reverse of the panel. I thank Olivier Mertens (Artnormal) for his identification and further discussions (report available on request). The seal is very old, possibly seventeenth century, reason why the d'Ablaing van Giessenburg provenance is here tentatively listed before the Droste and Bicker van Swieten provenance. The only 17th century family member with a demonstrable art collection was Jan d'Ablaing (d'Ableing, D'Ablijn) (1601-in or before 1657) from Amsterdam. His inventory of 25 June 1644 lists some 50 paintings, among them a large *Venus* by Rembrandt, estimated at 400 guilders (Montias Database: <https://research.frick.org/montias/details/491>, website accessed January 2024). Theoretically he could have been the owner of our painting, provided it was executed before 1657, the year Jan's 'sterfhuijs' is referenced in the inventory of his mother Anna Heldewier (see <https://archieff.amsterdam/archief/5075/2408>, fol. 61, no. 8, website accessed January 2024). Motivations for drawing up the 1644 inventory remain unclear, possibly Jan went bankrupt (in which case maintaining an art collection would have been less likely). His name has not been found in the Amsterdam burial registers, possibly implying a move elsewhere. Of course, the present wax seal could belong to other – possibly later – family members.
- 2 Lugt no. 442; Hoet 1752, I, pp. 423-430, p. 425: '39 Een fraei Stuk zeer konstig en uytvoerig geschildert door Jan Steen, h. 13 d. br. 11 d.' ('A fine Piece very artful and elaborately painted by Jan Steen, 13 x 11 inch'). While the measurements (13 x 11 inch = c. 33 x c. 28 cm.) equal those of the present work, an identifying description lacks. However, the same work was again auctioned in the 1741 Bicker van Swieten sale with identical measurements and fitting description (see Provenance and following note). The identification of the Droste sale painting with Steen's work in the Bicker van Swieten sale is strongly supported by the fact that many other works from the Droste sale likewise reappear in the Bicker van Swieten sale: D 31 (Van der Werff) = BvS 73; D 38 (Metsu) = BvS 143; D 40 (Dou) = BvS 64; D 77 (Willem van Mieris) = BvS 191; D 83 (Wouwerman) = BvS 125; D 86 (Frans van Mieris the Elder) = BvS 51; D 94 (Van Baalen) = BvS 47; D 100 (Asselijn) = BvS 218; D 103 (Rottenhammer) = BvS 44, D 108 (Spranger) = BvS 247.
- 3 Lugt no. 537; Hoet 1752, 2, pp. 10-30, p. 27 (mistakenly as 12 April 1731, mistakenly as lot 207): "Een Man die zyn Dogter verkoopt voor brood h. 13 d. br. 11 d. door denzelve [Jan Steen] 60- o' ('A Man who sells his Daughter for bread 13 x 11 inch by the same [Jan Steen] 60-o'). This is undoubtedly the present painting. The only other work that fits the description (but not the measurements) is Steen's much larger picture with the same subject in the Rijksmuseum. Since Hofstede de Groot 1907, cat. no. 72, it has been incorrectly assumed that the Rijksmuseum painting was the work auctioned in the Droste and Bicker van Swieten sales (see the text for a broader discussion).
- 4 The Golitsyn provenance follows from the red wax seal with the family's coat of arms on the reverse of the panel. I thank Olivier Mertens (Artnormal) for his identification. Mertens identifies the seal as 19th century, and tentatively suggests two possible owners: Prince Mikhail Alexandrovich Golitsyn (1804-1860) a.k.a. Michel Galitzine, a prominent Russian diplomat in Madrid and a.o. "écuyer de la cour" and "conseiller privé" (Geheimrat) of the Tsar, a writer and bibliophile known as a "connoisseur of fine arts"; or his son, Prince Sergey Mikhailovich Golitsyn (1843-1915). Report available on request.
- 5 For an extensive biography, see: M.J. Bok, 'The Life of Jan Steen', in: H.P. Chapman, W.Th. Kloek, A.K. Wheelock, Jr., *Jan Steen : painter and storyteller*, exh. cat. Washington, National Gallery of Art, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum 1996-1997, pp. 25-37.
- 6 See A. van Suchtelen, 'A Storyteller of Genius: Jan Steen and the Art of History Painting', in: A. van Suchtelen et al., *Jan Steen's Histories*, exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis 2018, p. 11.
- 7 *The Mocking of Ceres*, c. 1665/70, oil on canvas, 73.2 x 61.2 cm., private collection, surfaced in a sale, London, Christie's, 10 April 1987, lot 4. It had last been recorded in a sale, London, Christie's, 8 June 1839, lot 56. See Kirschenbaum 1977, cat. no. 72; Braun 1980, cat. no. A.30; A. van Suchtelen, in: The Hague 2018, pp. 150-153, cat. no. 17. Steen's *Bathsheba after the Bath*, signed, c. 1670/75, oil on panel, 58 x 45 cm., Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, surfaced in an auction in Paris, Hotel George V, Paris, 28 June 1988, lot 50. For the copy in the Museum der bildenden Künste, Leipzig, see: Kirschenbaum 1977, addendum, no. 12; Braun 1980, cat. no. B.51. I wish to thank Steen expert Ariane van Suchtelen, curator of the *Jan Steen's Histories* exhibition in the Mauritshuis, The Hague, for sharing her information with me.
- 8 Tellingly, the subject of the Rijksmuseum painting was not recognized either until 1907. See N.N., *Catalogus van schilderijen van Oud-Hollandsche meesters : collectie C. Hoogendijk*, exh. cat. The Hague, Pulchri Studio 1899, p. 10, cat. no. 69, as *De ruil* ('The exchange'). Hofstede de Groot 1907, cat. no. 72 was the first to identify the subject, but mistakenly connected the work to the Droste and Bicker van Swieten sales. See further: C.W. de Groot, *Jan Steen : beeld en woord*, Utrecht/Nijmegen 1952, pp. 68-70 (1670s); L. de Vries, *Jan Steen : de schilderende Uilenspiegel*, Amsterdam 1976, pp. 26, 40, fig. 8 (c. 1655); Kirschenbaum 1977, cat. no. 73 (c. 1667); Braun 1980, cat. no. 258

- (c. 1665-1667); M. Westermann, *The Amusements of Jan Steen : Comic Painting in the Seventeenth Century*, Zwolle 1997, pp. 20-21 (fig. 4), 279, 285 (c. 1658-1661); W. Kloek, *Jan Steen (1626-1679)*, Zwolle/Amsterdam 2005, pp. 28, 30, fig. 21; Van Suchtelen 2018, pp. 10-31, pp. 24-25, fig. 24 (c. 1665-1667). For an overview of the subject's modest pictorial tradition, see J. van Tatenhove, 'Een episode uit de fabel van Erysichthon getekend door Maarten de Vos', in: *Oud Holland* 97 (1983), pp. 53-58, with further references.
- 9 See for an interesting take on Hesiod's version of the myth K. Ormand, 'Marriage, Identity, and the Tale of Mestra in the Hesiodic Catalogue of Women Author(s)', in: *The American Journal of Philology* 125/3 (2004), pp. 303-338.
 - 10 The following makes use of the translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* by A.S. Kline (2000). See <https://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/trans/Ovhome.htm#askline> (website accessed December 2023). In addition, I consulted the Dutch translation by M. d'Hane-Scheltema, Amsterdam 1993. For Van Mander's well-known comments on the *Metamorphoses*, see his 'Wtleghingh op den Metamorphosis Pub. Ouidij Nasonis', in: K. van Mander, *Het Schilder-Boeck*, Haarlem 1604, esp. 'Voor-reden', fol. 4v ('t'Schilders Bybel'), and book 8, fol. 72v-73r, for comments on the story of Mestra and Erysichthon.
 - 11 For a careful analysis of the advancement of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in writing and in art during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, see E.J. Sluijter, 'Ovidius' Herschepingen herschapen : Over de popularisering van mythologische thematiek in beeld en woord' in: J. Bloemendal, A.A. Sneller (eds.), *Bronnen van inspiratie : Receptie van de klassieken in de vroegmoderne Nederlanden in muziek, literatuur en beeldende kunst (De Zeventiende Eeuw 32 (2007))*, pp. 45-76.
 - 12 Kirschenbaum 1977, cat. no. 69b; Braun 1980, cat. no. 116; Van Suchtelen 2018, pp. 16-17, fig. 8. See also J.B.F. van Gils, 'Theseus bij Acheloüs van Jan Steen', in: *Oud Holland* 57 (1940), pp. 145-148. In addition to (1) the present work; (2) the Rijksmuseum *Erysichthon*; and (3) *The Banquet of Acheloüs*, the remaining paintings by Steen with Ovidian themes are: (4) *Vertumnus and Pomona*, last mentioned in a sale in Dordrecht, J.A. van Dam, 1 June 1829, lot 120; (5) *The Mocking of Ceres* in a private collection (see above, note 7); and (6) *The Sacrifice of Ephigenia*, New York, The Leiden Collection. See Kirschenbaum 1977, cat. nos. 71, 72, 74. Kirschenbaum's cat. no. 75, 'Fabel van Mitra, uit Naso', as mentioned by Houbraken with reference to pickled herrings, must be the *Erysichthon* in the Rijksmuseum (Mitra = Mestra), as rightly observed by Westermann 1997, p. 21.
 - 13 Erysichthon is traditionally known to be the king of Thas-saly, but this is not mentioned by Ovid, nor by Van Man-der, Steen's most likely sources. Ovid mentions his wealth (book 8, 846), and it likewise follows from the fact that he has workers, one of whom he kills with his axe.
 - 14 De Groot 1952, p. 70 cleverly connects the bread and herring in the Rijksmuseum painting with the food traditionally eaten in Leiden at the yearly celebration of the city's liberation from the Spanish siege, the so-called 'Leids ontzet' (3 October 1574), when the Watergeuzen brought white bread and herring to Leiden's starving population. This would be a most appropriate and funny reference, both regarding Erysichthon's permanent starvation and Steen's (and possibly the commissioner of the painting's) Leiden origins.
 - 15 The boy with his blue hat and wicker basket recalls fisher boys, such as those painted by Frans Hals. That Steen here alluded to the fisherman in the fable seems, however, unlikely. The boy's function here is to carry along the breads now laying on the ground. Moreover, in Steen's *Erysichthon* in the Rijksmuseum a similar boy carrying a basket full of bread can be seen in the background.
 - 16 See Westermann 1997, pp. 209-211; J. Hillegers, in: J. Hillegers, W. Wagenaar-Burgemeester, *Salomon Lilian Old Masters 2012*, Amsterdam 2012, pp. 62-71, cat. no. 14, p. 70; W. Kloek, 'Jan Steen, His Repertoire of Motifs and History Painting', in: The Hague 2018, pp. 32-53, pp. 42-44.
 - 17 See, among others, G. Luijten, in: E. Hinterding, G. Luijten, M. Royalton-Kisch, *Rembrandt the Printmaker*, exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, London, British Museum 2000-2001, pp. 122-125, cat. no. 18.
 - 18 For a discussion of this print and related works dealing with poverty and charity, see G. Luijten, in: E. de Jongh, G. Luijten, *Mirror of everyday life : genreprints in the Netherlands 1550-1700*, exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum 1997, pp. 276-280, cat. no. 56; see also G. Luijten, in: Amsterdam/London 2000-2001, pp. 250-253, cat. no. 60.
 - 19 See P.H. Chapman, in: Washington/Amsterdam 1996-1997, pp. 119-121, cat. no. 7; E.J. Sluijter, 'Jan Steen en de milddadigheid van de Delftse burger', in: *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 56 (2008), pp. 312-331, esp. pp. 317-319, fig. 6.
 - 20 Westermann 1997, pp. 294-295, figs. 175, 176; Kloek 2018, pp. 41-43, figs. 18, 20.
 - 21 Kloek 2018, pp. 41-43, fig. 19 likewise connects Lucas's engraving to Steen's *Dismissal of Hagar* in Dresden.
 - 22 H. Jacobs, *Den schat der armen oft een medecijn-boecxken*, Antwerp 1626, p. 66: 'Neemt Maluwe sietse in water en doeter by een doyer van een eye met een lepel vol olye van Violetten, is goet ghebruyckt voor een Clisteri, in pijn der Dermen.'
 - 23 J. van Beverwijck, *Schat der gesontheit* (first published 1636), in: *Alle de wercken*, Amsterdam 1660, pp. 95-96: 'Soo klaegt Cicero dat hy van veel Beet en Maluwe te eten

den loop ghekregeen heeft [...] met den welcken de Lati-
jnsche Poët Horatius oock stemt, wanneer hy seyt dat de
Maluwe het verladen en verstoppt ofte swaer lichaem dien-
stigh en gesont is. [...] seyt Galenus [...] dan het sap ofte
bloedt dat daer van komt, is wat dickachtig. Sy maect
den buyck week, en doet lichten kamerganck hebben.’

- 24 Ibidem.: ‘Laet Maluw en Lattouw tot uwen dis genaken,
/ Dat sal u door het lijf een rassen af-gangh maken: /
Vergeet dit nimmermeer, het is een out gebruyck; / Want
naer u wesen toont, ghy hebt een harden buyck
- 25 Westermann 1997, chapter 7, ‘History as Tragicomedy’;
M. Westermann, ‘Jan Steens historische parade’, in: *The
Hague* 2018, pp. 54-72.
- 26 See Kloek 2018, pp. 36-40. For an overview of dated
paintings, see Braun 1980, p. 83.
- 27 See note 8.
- 28 The panel exists of one plank of Baltic oak. A total of 223
heartwood rings were counted, the last one dating from
1623. To this can be added a minimum of nine years of
sapwood rings, and a minimum of two years seasoning of
the wood, resulting in an earliest date for the panel to be
ready to be painted on from 1634. Under the assumption
of a median of 15 sapwood rings a creation is plausible
from 1640 upwards. I thank Sjoerd van Daalen (Van
Daalen Dendrochronologie) for his dendrochronological
research, January 2024. Report available on request.
- 29 Kloek tentatively suggests a late dating for the painting,
following a first-hand inspection, together with Ariane
van Suchtelen, Amsterdam, November 2023.

cat. no. 6

Swabian School

c. 1482

Portrait of a Man with a Red Hat, possibly Eitel Friedrich II von Hohenzollern (1452-1512)

Oil on panel
52.5 x 35.5 cm.

Provenance:

Rome, collection of Cavaliere Ludovic de Spiridon

His sale, Amsterdam, Frederik Muller & Cie, 19 June 1928, lot 48, as attributed to Dieric Bouts

Spain, private collection until 2022

Literature:

W. Schöne, *Dieric Bouts und seine Schule*, Berlin/Leipzig 1938, p. 217, cat. no. 153, as follower of Dieric Bouts

The portrait

The recently surfaced *Portrait of a Man with a Red Hat* is a magnificent example of Northern renaissance portraiture. Depicted against a deep black background is a man wearing a high bright red hat and a blue cloak over a white chemise. In the red hat several *pentimenti* are visible – an earlier rendering of the hat was somewhat smaller – neatly revealing the creative process. The cloak might have once had a more purple hue, as microscopic pigment analysis has revealed.¹ Our sitter is clearly a man of stature, probably around thirty years old. His face is finely modelled, showing a subtle variety of pink tones for the incarnate and arresting care for detail around the eyelids. His half-length hair with vivid highlights is dark blonde, his eyes are blue, he has a double chin, and he boasts a particularly pronounced nose. During the portrait's recent restoration, a wart appeared next to the nose. The sitter's gaze, serious and fierce, is directed at the beholder. With his right index finger he points to his left hand, in which

he holds a paper scroll. The painting's execution is exceptional, striking a neat balance between refined detail and monumental grandeur.

Dieric Bouts and a curious double portrait

During its recorded history, our portrait has only made one previous public appearance. In 1928 it featured in the Amsterdam sale of the collection of Ludovic de Spiridon, the son of the renowned collector Georges de Spiridon (1808-1887), originally from Beirut but operating from Rome between 1830 until his death.² Upon his father's death, Ludovic inherited a significant part of his father's collection. Nothing is known about the portrait's earlier provenance. Was it with the father since the nineteenth century? Or did Ludovic add it to the collection at a later moment? In any case, the painting was included in the Amsterdam sale as attributed to the famous Dieric Bouts (c. 1410-1475), a painter born in Haarlem but mainly active in Leuven. The auction catalogue does not reveal if the attribution was longstanding,





DIERICK BOUTS. Porträtsstück.

von Reynolds, Gainsborough, Romney, Hoppner, Lawrence, Raeburn, Constable usw. Herbstausstellung: alte Meister, vor allem englische. Frühjahrsausstellung: englische Aquarelle.

Carlfax Gallery, 24 Bury Street, St. James's. Seltene Stücke alter Meister; moderne englische Meister von besonderer Originalität. Monatlich wechselnde Ausstellungen. (Spezialität: William Blake).

Colnaghi & Co., 13/14 Pall Mall East: alt-englische Meister, ebenso italienische, holländische usw. (Goya). (Spezialität: Handzeichnungen, Gravierungen usw. alter Meister, besonders englischer).

Connel & Sons: 47 Old Bond Street; Spezialität: Aquarelle und Schwarz-Weißblätter von modernen Künstlern: Cameron, Whistler, C.W. Bartlett, Spence usw.

Doré Gallery, 35 New Bond Street: stets wechselnde Ausstellungen der verschiedensten Künstler. Permanente Ausstellung der Werke Dorés.

Dowdeswell Galleries: 160 New Bond Street: Alte Meister verschiedener Schulen.

Darlacher Bros., 142 New Bond Street: Alte Meister.

Duveen Brothers, Old Bond Street: Diese Firma kaufte im vergangenen Jahre die Rodolphe Kann-Sammlung in Paris um 1 Million Pfund an. Im übrigen besteht ihre Spezialität in seltensten Stücken altchinesischen Porzellans.

Fine Art Society, 148 New Bond Street: Wechselnde Ausstellungen moderner Künstler (Frank Brangwyn usw.).

Gooden & Fox, 57 Pall Mall: Englische Meister.

Goupil Gallery (William Marchant & Co.), 5 Regent Street: Wechselnde Ausstellung verschiedener Meister. Spezialität: „Meister, die den ‚Romanticists‘ nahe stehen“.

Gutkunst, 16 King Street: Schwarz-Weißblätter: Dürer, Rembrandt usw. Auch moderne Meister: Legros, Whistler.

Fig. 1 *Portrait of a Man and his Wife* at Sackville Gallery, London, as Dieric Bouts, in: *Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft* 1 (1908), p. 712

or rather of a more recent date. However, one can make an educated guess. It seems that whoever was responsible for the attribution – Ludovic de Spiridon or someone else – was aware of an article discussing the London art trade, that appeared twenty years prior to the Amsterdam sale, in 1908, in the German art periodical *Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft*.³ This small contribution lists interesting works currently for purchase at Mayfair and St James's galleries. At Sackville Gallery, the article notes (and illustrates) among others a surprising double portrait of a man and a woman, according to the article by Dieric Bouts (fig. 1). There can be no doubt that the man in this double portrait – a work of limited quality, but intriguing nonetheless – is the same sitter in the same outfit and pose seen in our portrait. The article even gives a brief description of the painting: “This picture was painted in Louvain during the same time as the well-known large diptych by Bouts in the Brussels Museum, *The Justice of Emperor Otto III*.

For the large figures in that work show a remarkable affinity with the painting discussed here, especially in the drawing and the position of the hands. The man wears a blue jacket and a big red hat, his wife a red dress and a large white headdress. Size of the panel: 50 x 65 cm.’⁴

Looking at this Brussels diptych (fig. 2), it follows that the attribution of the Sackville work to Bouts was triggered by a comparison with the man on the Brussels' left wing, who wears a red hat, a blue cloak and holds a scroll in his hand (fig. 3). The superficial parallels are all there, although the comparison is unfavorable for the Sackville work, which' quality, even judging from the black and white photograph, does not hold up to Bouts' brilliant effort.

Nonetheless, the Sackville double portrait's attribution to Bouts was adopted by the art-historical field.⁵ And as said, it probably furnished the subsequent attribution to Bouts of the Spiridon work, an attribution that was further fueled by the delicate portraits of men with red hats and blue coats painted by Bouts, such as those in the National Gallery, London, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (figs. 4, 5).⁶ These portraits' captivating expression, and the emphasis on the sitters' hands shows certain affinity with the present portrait. In 1938 the Bouts attribution was brought up once more, this time by the German art historian Wolfgang Schöne (1910–1989). In his monograph on Bouts, Schöne lists the Spiridon work as no. 153, an ‘interesting portrait from the Bouts school’, comparing it with Bouts' London portrait. For the Sackville Gallery's double portrait, he had little admiration.⁷

After 1938, nothing was heard anymore from either work; the Sackville copy, for that matter, is still under the radar. Before continuing, let us consider the implications of the existence of the copy. If our work is the original portrait, the Sackville copy implies that either our work had a female pendant, and that both pendants were subsequently merged into one double portrait by a proactive copyist; or, that our painting was initially twice its current width, and is actually the left half of a former double portrait, cut in two separate halves.⁸ In either case, one would expect



Fig. 2 Dieric Bouts, *The Justice of Emperor Otto III*, 1471/75, 323.5 x 182 cm., Brussels, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium



Fig. 3
Detail of fig. 2,
man with a red hat
and a paper scroll
in his hand

there to be a female portrait, the appearance of which is known through the Sackville copy. As it turns out, such a hypothetical female portrait actually exists.

Two ladies with rosaries

The history of the female pendant portrait can be tracked to the 1930s. In October 1932, a small add in the art historical periodical *Weltkunst* announced a sale to be held in The Hague by the auction house Van Marle en Bignell, in which a number of early German and Swiss paintings were to be sold.⁹ The announcement is illustrated with one of the lots to be auctioned, a 'Frauenbildnis', canvas on panel, measuring 50 x 32 cm., there attributed to the Swiss Renaissance painter Hans Fries (c. 1465-c. 1520) (fig. 6). The woman in this painting, with her white



Fig. 4 Dieric Bouts, *Portrait of a Man (Jan van Winckele?)*, 1462, oil with egg tempera on panel, 31.6 x 20.5 cm, London, National Gallery



Fig. 5 Dieric Bouts, *Portrait of a Man*, c. 1470, oil on panel, 29.5 x 20.6 cm., New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art

headdress and a rosary in her hand is clearly identical to the lady in the Sackville copy. Would she, then, be the pendant of our man with the red hat?

After the 1932 advertisement nothing was ever seen or heard of the *Weltkunst* 'Frauenbildnis' anymore.¹⁰ However, the story does not end here. In a 1949 New York auction another version of the same female portrait surfaced, clearly again depicting the same woman, again holding a precious rosary. This *Portrait of a Young Woman* (fig. 7), of a distinctly higher quality than the *Weltkunst* 'Frauenbildnis', came with an attribution to – not surprising – Hans Fries. The New York sale catalogue mentions the Swiss art historian Walter Hugelshofer (1899-1987) as the expert behind the attribution, and the support of the eminent museum director Wilhelm Valentiner (1880-1958).¹¹

In 1953 the newly surfaced female portrait was published by the German art historian Ernst Buchner (1892-1962) in his seminal *Das deutsche Bildnis der Spätgotik und der frühen Dürerzeit*.¹² Buchner, who had included the *Weltkunst* 'Frauenbildnis' in his book, and only became aware of the newly surfaced original after the printing of his text (but just in time to add an image of the newly surfaced portrait, with an explaining caption), describes the portrait as follows:

'68. Swabian Master around 1470. *Portrait of a young woman*. Konstanz, Collection Kisters (The original, surfaced after [the text] going to press, painted on panel. The painting on canvas discussed in the text and catalogue is evidently an old copy, known to the author only from a weak illustration.)'



Fig. 6 'Frauenbildnis' attributed to Hans Fries, in: *Weltkunst* 6/40 (October 1932), p. 2



Fig. 7 Swabian School, *Portrait of a Young Woman*, oil on panel, 51.5 x 34 cm., Kreuzlingen, Kisters Collection

By 1953 the *Portrait of a Young Woman* had thus landed in the collection of the German art collector Heinz Kisters (1912-1977), had been scholarly established as the original portrait, and now carried Buchner's careful attribution to the 'Swabian School', the German region west of Bavaria, that historically coincided roughly with the modern German state of Baden-Württemberg, with Stuttgart as its capital. Other art historians, though, made efforts to be more specific. In 1957 Alfred Stange (1894-1964) in his *Deutsche Malerei der Gotik: Schwaben in der Zeit von 1450 bis 1500* put forward an attribution to Ludwig Schongauer (c. 1440-1494), an artist from the Swabian region, mainly active in Ulm and Augsburg: 'The delicately shaped, almost front view portrait with the head tilted to the side and covered by a wide, white hood, the large, dark eyes, the flowering mouth and the slender hand once again reveals the grace

of Schongauer's art.'¹³ Two years later, Kurt Bauch (1897-1975), best known as one of the most eminent Rembrandt-scholars of the twentieth century, attributed the portrait to Ludwig's younger brother, the famous Martin Schongauer (1440/45-1491), who worked in Colmar.¹⁴ It was Bauch's attribution that remained with the portrait at the time.¹⁵

A double portrait

What can be said about the relationship between the Kisters Collection's *Portrait of a Young Woman* and the present *Portrait of a Man with a Red Hat*? Unfortunately, the female portrait has not been on public view since 1970.¹⁶ And to the present author's knowledge no technical examining of the panel or the paint layer was ever undertaken. Still, it is very clear that the woman's finesse, her soft emotional expression, and the long and almost geometrical

folds in her dress completely concur with the high-quality execution of the present portrait, our sitter's psychological realism and the stylized drapery of his robe. There can, in other words, be no doubt that these two portraits, of near exactly the same size, belong together.¹⁷ The question is, how? As noted, the Sackville copy shows the two sitters – husband and wife, we may presume – in intimate physical proximity, as the woman holds her right hand on the man's shoulder in a gesture of deep affection (fig. 8). However, the woman in the Kisters painting lacks a visible right arm or hand. Rather, her arm is covered with a greenish robe or mantle. Would the hand on the shoulder, then, be an addition by the Sackville copyist, an addition with the intention to unify two separate portraits into one cohesive double portrait? No. The recent restoration of our male portrait has, in fact, revealed the woman's original hand on our sitter's shoulder (fig. 9). One can even see the remains of the precious red stone that once adorned the ring on her index finger, and the remains of the ring around her thumb. This discovery, then, proves

unequivocally that the two portraits once formed one painting, and that they were separated at a certain moment in time. A semi-transparent layered image of the male and female portraits on top of the Sackville copy gives an idea of their original appearance (fig. 10). Analogous with the painted-out hand of the woman on her husband's shoulder in the present portrait, we can expect the remaining part of her hand, and the remaining part of the man's left hand holding the paper scroll, to hide underneath the paint layers that now constitute the green robe and part of the dark background in the lower left corner of the female portrait.

Swabian School

Although the Kisters *Portrait of a Young Woman* has not been seen in public for over half a century, its attribution to Martin Schongauer has gradually made way among scholars for the more neutral attribution to the Swabian School, as proposed early on by Buchner. Given the fact that our portrait once formed one artwork with the Kisters portrait, this attribution



Fig. 8 Detail of fig. 1, Sackville copy, detail of the shoulder with the woman's hand

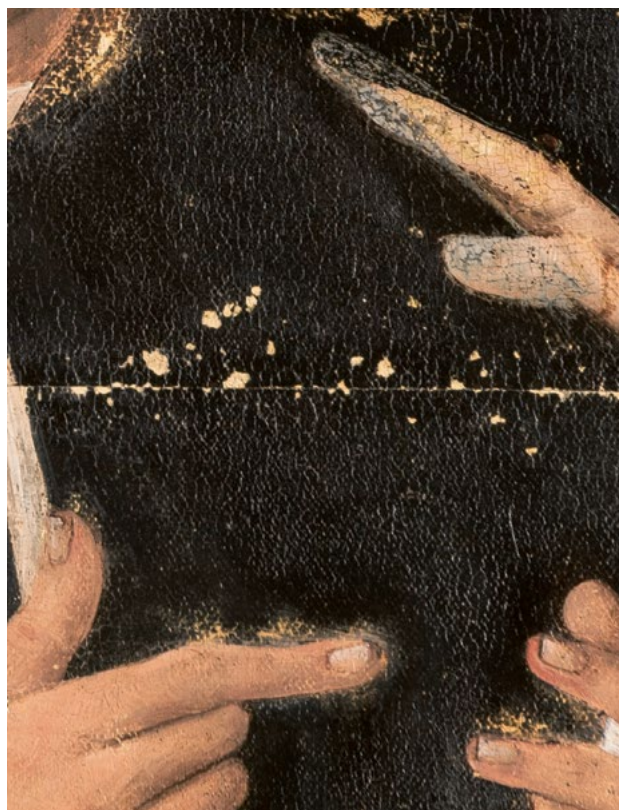


Fig. 9 Detail of cat. no. 6, the shoulder with the woman's hand during restoration



Fig. 10 Layered image of cat. no. 6 and the Kisters Collection portrait (65% transparency) on top of the Sackville copy

obviously extends to our work as well. More recent art historical literature has connected the Kisters work specifically with three other high-quality portraits, all with similar measurements and all attributable to the Swabian School. The earlier is the *Portrait of a Woman of the Hofer Family* in the National Gallery, London (fig. 11), datable to around 1470.¹⁸ As indicated by the caption above her head, this delicately painted portrait depicts a lady of the Hofer family, who holds in her left hand a forget-me-not, referencing the primary function of her portrait. Hofer, though, was not an uncommon name in Southern Germany, and the caption regrettably has not led to further details concerning her identity. As with the Kisters portrait and the present work, the artist of the London portrait has successfully struck a balance between realism and idealism. That said, the carved quality of the Hofer portrait – both in the definition of the sitter's facial features, and in the folds of her impressive headdress – has given way to a softer nuance in our work and the Kisters portrait, which must have been painted about a decade later. This stylistic observation is confirmed by a recent dendrochronological analysis of the present panel which, like the London portrait, is made of spruce wood (*Picea*), and was ready for use from 1481 onwards.¹⁹

The other two associated portraits, which form a pendant pair, are both preserved in the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection, Madrid (figs. 12, 13).²⁰



Fig. 11 Swabian School, *Portrait of a Woman of the Hofer Family*, c. 1470, oil on silver fir panel, 53.7 x 40.8 cm., London National Gallery

Painted on pine wood panels, the *Portrait of a Man* and *Portrait of a Woman* have been steadily attributed to the Swabian school since 1930 and depict sitters not unlike those in the present portrait and the Kisters work.²¹ The woman wears a very similar white headdress, rings on her fingers, and holds an incarnation and a rosary in her hands. As with the Kisters sitter, her facial features are softly modelled, although her disposition seems more energized, as opposed to the gentleness of the Kisters model. The male portrait – capably executed with similar care of detail around the eyes but lacking the present portrait's vigour – shows a corpulent man in his thirties. Like our sitter he wears a red hat, although a smaller variant. In contrast to our sitter though, he does not address the beholder, but instead looks at his female companion, which makes for a less arresting effect. He, too, holds a rosary and a little flower in his hands. Based on both sitters' clothing, the Madrid pendants have been dated around 1480.²² While these portraits were in all probability not



Fig. 12 Swabian School, *Portrait of a Man*, c. 1480, oil on pine panel, 55 x 43.5 cm., Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza



Fig. 13 Swabian School, *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1480, oil on pine panel, 50.4 x 39.5 cm., Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza

painted by the same artist responsible for the present portrait and the Kisters work – which seem of a superior quality – they do furnish the fitting artistic and geographical context.

Identification – Eitel Friedrich II von Hohenzollern?

What, lastly, can be said about the identity of our sitter? Clearly, whoever was in the position to commission such a high-quality double portrait belonged to the uppermost echelons of society. We might assume that the double portrait was meant to commemorate the obvious bond between the sitters, so strongly emphasized by the woman's hand on the man's shoulder. Moreover, the paper scroll to which the man emphatically points his finger seems to likewise address this union. Is the scroll a marriage contract? That could just be. With further identifying captions and/or attributes lacking, we are left to the sitters' physical profile. Our man has a very recognizable long and slightly curved nose next to which, as said, reappeared a wart during the recent restoration (figs. 14, 15). It so happens that among the highest nobility

in Swabia we find a candidate with an neatly fitting profile – both physical and social. This candidate is count Eitel Friedrich II von Hohenzollern (1452-1512), a leading member of the Swabian branch of the Hohenzollern family that ruled the Swabian lands from the magnificent Hohenzollern Castle, exactly between Colmar in the west, and Ulm and Augsburg in the east.²³ Eitel Friedrich's father Jobst Nikolaus I (1433-1488) was the ruling count of Hohenzollern

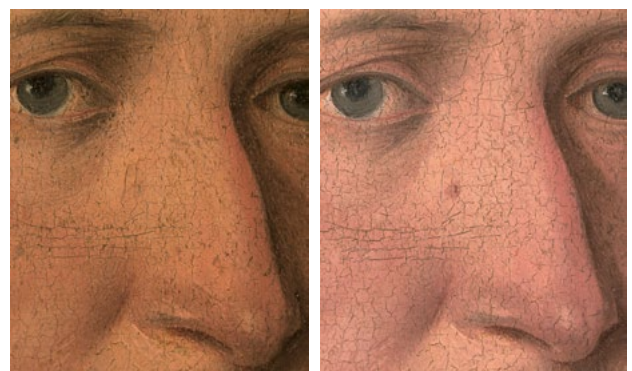


Fig. 14-15 Details of cat. no. 6, before and after restoration, reappearance of the painted-out wart

until his death in 1488, after which Eitel Friedrich took over. We are informed about Eitel Friedrich's appearance through a painting and an engraving. The painting, now in Jagdschloss Grunewald and attributed to the painter Hans Schäufelein (1480-1538/40), depicts Eitel at a later age, in any case well after 1501, when his intimate friend the German King and later Emperor Maximilian I (1459-1519) awarded him the membership of the Order of the Golden Fleece, which' collar hangs around his neck (fig. 16).²⁴ Evidently Eitel Friedrich, with his long, slightly curved nose, double chin and the somewhat leaning eyes, significantly resembles our sitter, who would have been at least twenty years younger in our portrait. It is, though, the engraving that gives additional body to the identification. In contrast to the painted portrait, the print depicts Eitel Friedrich specifically with a wart next to his nose (fig. 17). While this wart is located at the 'wrong' left side of Eitel Friedrich's nose, this 'mistake' is easily explained by the engraving technique, which reproduces all imagery in reverse



Fig. 16 Attributed to Hans Schäufelein, *Portrait of Eitel Friedrich II of Hohenzollern (1452-1512)*, oil on panel, 40.1 x 31.5 cm., Berlin, Jagdschloss Grunewald



Fig. 17 Dominicus Custos after Giovanni Battista Fontana, *Portrait of Eitel Friedrich II of Hohenzollern (1452-1512) in armour*, etching, in: Jakob Schrenck von Notzing, *Heldenbuch*, 1603

(fig. 18). Admittedly, the engraving is of a later date, but the inclusion of the wart is extremely specific, and was surely based on earlier information.²⁵ Moreover, assessing Eitel Friedrich's biography we find that he married Magdalene of Brandenburg (1460-1496), member of the Brandenburg branch of the House of Hohenzollern, in Berlin on 17 June 1482. Their marriage – of great significance to the Hohenzollern's, as it strengthened the bond between its Swabian and Brandenburg branches – aligns perfectly with the presumed age of our sitter (about thirty), with the age of the bride (around twenty-two), with the dating of the panel, which was ready for use in 1481, and with the imagery of the double portrait, which clearly alludes to the bond between the sitters.

One final question concerns the sitter's clothing. Would a member of a ruling noble family have worn such a tall red hat? It has been suggested that the



Fig. 18
Detail of fig. 17, Eitel
Friedrich's face (image
reversed)

sitter of Bouts' *Portrait of a Man* in the National Gallery (fig. 4) depicts the physician Jan van den Winckele, a *magister artium* at the university of Leuven.²⁶ A scholar thus, but did the high nobility wear this headgear as well? The answer is yes. Around 1461/62 Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400-1464) depicted Anthony of Burgundy (1421-1504), the bastard son of Philip the Good (1396-1467), the

Duke of Burgundy, with exactly such a tall-shaped red hat (fig. 19).²⁷ In the portrait, Anthony wears the red hat in combination with a violet-brown doublet and a white chemise. It should be remembered here that the cloak of our sitter probably had a more purple appearance earlier on. And where Anthony of Burgundy proudly wears the collar of the Golden Fleece, this honour befell Eitel Friedrich only later, in 1501. Could, then, our sitter be Eitel Friedrich II von Hohenzollern, and would the Kisters portrait depict Magdalene of Brandenburg, in her early twenties? It is quite possible. If so, the double portrait could well have been painted at the occasion of their betrothal – hence the paper scroll – or to celebrate their marriage bond, so very important to the House of Hohenzollern.²⁸

JH



Fig. 19 Rogier van der Weyden, *Portrait of Anthony of Burgundy* (1421-1504), c. 1461/62, oil on panel, 38.4 x 28 cm., Brussels, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium

Notes

- 1 Microscopic pigment analysis was undertaken by Studio Redivivus in The Hague during the recent restoration of the work. See Technical Report Studio Redivivus, February 2024: 'The pigment mixture observed is a common recipe observed in early Northern paintings [...] This was usually meant to imitate a purple hue. However, the use of lake pigments can sometimes lead to age degradation.' The panel is intersected with a horizontal wooden inlay strip of c. 2.5 cm in width about halfway the panel's surface. Report available on request.
- 2 According to the introduction written by the Italian professor of art history Lionello Verturi (1885-1961) in the 1928 Amsterdam sale catalogue, Ludovic de Spiridon was the eighth child son of Georges de Spiridon (1808-1887), who was born Beirut but came to Rome in 1830 to study art, and who from the mid-19th century assembled an enormous collection, several works apparently obtained from the famous collection of Cardinal Joseph Fesch (1763-1839). Upon the father's death, his collection was supposedly divided between two of his sons, Ludovic and his older brother Joseph de Spiridon (1845-1930), the latter continuing his father's collecting activities in Paris (see on Joseph and his wife Marie Octavie Dangu: M. Laclotte et al., *Les donateurs du Louvre*, Paris 1989, p. 326, and Joseph's sale, Berlin, Paul Cassirer/Hugo Helbing, 31 May 1929). An article in the New York Times of 3 September 1964 (p. 26), reports on an art theft at the villa of the 81-year old countess Margherita Gallotti Spiridon, in Grottaferrata, 20 miles southwest of Rome. The countess told the police that two paintings by Raphael and a self portrait by Antonello di Messina had been stolen from her villa on July 12 that year. According to the article, 'The Countess is a niece of Ludovic Spiridon, one of the collector's [Georges de Spiridon] sons who inherited a share of his more than 8,000 paintings.' Although conceivable, it cannot be substantiated that the present work had already been part of Georges de Spiridon collection.
- 3 'Einiges vom Londoner Kunsthandel', in: *Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft* 1 (1908), Halbband 2, pp. 710-714. The article depicts the painting, mentions it being with Sackville gallery, and gives a brief description.
- 4 'Einiges vom Londoner Kunsthandel' 1908, p. 714.
- 5 M. Conway, *The Van Eycks and their followers*, London 1921, p. 164: 'if by him [Bouts], it must have been painted early in his career.'
- 6 For these portraits, see C. Périer-d'Ieteren, *Dirk Bouts : het volledige oeuvre*, Brussels 2005, pp. 114-119, 268, 297, cat. nos. 13, 23.
- 7 Schöne 1938, p. 217, under cat. no. 153, a), with reference to the *Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft*.
- 8 A third option, entailing the copyist inventing a female portrait alongside the man with the red hat, seems less likely.
- 9 *Weltkunst* 6/40 (2 October 1938), pp. 2-3.
- 10 The *Weltkunst* advertisement is said to refer to a Van Marle & Bignell sale in The Hague, featuring important early German paintings. In the literature (E. Buchner, *Das deutsche Bildnis der Spätgotik und der frühen Dürerzeit*, Berlin 1953, p. 196, cat. no. 64) one finds reference to a sale in The Hague, Van Marle & Bignell, 21/22 December 1932. However, the portrait does not feature in that auction, which does not include other early German paintings, either. Auction catalogue consulted January 2024, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum library.
- 11 Sale New York, Parke-Bernet Galleries, 24 February 1949, lot 67, as Hans Fries (from the collection of J.K. Schneider, Royal Oak, Michigan). The sale catalogue entry mentions a note dd. 12 December 1945 by the art historian William Suida (1877-1959) who likewise thinks of Hans Fries. Apparently – although not mentioned in the catalogue entry – Hugelshofer and/or Suida were aware of the *Weltkunst* copy portrait.
- 12 Buchner 1953, pp. 74, 196, cat. no. 64, fig. 68.
- 13 A. Stange, *Deutsche Malerei der Gotik : Schwaben in der Zeit von 1450 bis 1500*, Munich/Berlin 1957, p. 20.
- 14 K. Bauch, 'Bildnisse von Martin Schongauer', in: I. Schroth et al., *Studien zur Kunst des Oberrheins : Festschrift für Werner Noack*, Konstanz/Freiburg 1959, pp. 73-76.
- 15 See P. Strieder, D. Stemmler, *Sammlung Heinz Kisters : altdeutsche und altniederländische Gemälde*, exh. cat. Nuremberg, Germanischen Nationalmuseum 1996, p. 11, cat. no. 51, pl. 37, with literature references.
- 16 Sale London, Christie's (Highly important pictures from the collection formed by the late Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, the property of Heinz Kisters, Esq. and others), 26 June 1970, lot 23. The painting had been part of the Kisters collection at least since 1953, but probably earlier (see Buchner 1953) until 1963, when it was included in an exhibition on the Kisters Collection in Nuremberg (see Nuremberg 1963). Apparently Kisters sold the painting to the chancellor of Germany Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967) after the 1963 exhibition. At least, that appears from the fact that the painting was later included in the 1970 London sale. After Adenauer's death, Kisters was supposedly forced to buy back a number of paintings he had sold to the chancellor.
- 17 The woman seen in the 1932 'Frauenbildnis' depicted in *Weltkunst* resembles the woman in the Sackville copy more explicitly than the woman in the portrait in the Kisters Collection. However, the quality and execution of the Kisters portrait completely matches that of the present work, whereas that is not the case with the mediocre *Weltkunst* portrait (an opinion already aired by Buchner 1953). How and when the *Weltkunst* portrait

- came into being remains unclear at this moment. No male pendant has ever been recorded.
- 18 See J. Dunkerton, S. Foister, D. Gordon, N. Penny, *Giotto to Dürer : early European painting in the National Gallery*, New Haven/London 1991, pp. 300-301, cat. no. 34; C. Bugler, *Strange beauty : German paintings at the National Gallery*, London 2014, p. 17.
 - 19 I thank Prof. Dr. Peter Klein (Universität Hamburg, Zentrum Holzwirtschaft) for his dendrochronological research, dd. April 2022. Report available on request.
 - 20 Buchner 1953, p. 195, cat. nos. 59, 60; I. Lübbecke, *The Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection : Early German painting 1350-1550*, London 1991, pp. 100-105, cat. nos. 19, 20; J.M. Pita Andrade, M. del Mar Borobia Guerrero, *Old Masters : Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum*, Barcelona/Madrid 1992, p. 172, cat. nos. 264, 265; M. del Mar Borobia, *Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza : Old Masters*, Madrid 2009, p. 142. T.-H. Borchert, in: T.-H. Borchert et al., *Van Eyck to Dürer : The Influence of Early Netherlandish Painting on European Art, 1430-1530*, exh. cat. Bruges, Groeningemuseum 2010-2011, p. 329, cat. no. 162 (female portrait).
 - 21 Lübbecke 1991, p. 104, and note 12, who proposed – explicitly in connection with the Kisters portrait – the Upper Rhine region (between Basel and Bingen), on the west side of the Swabian lands, over a previous suggestion of Ulm (on the east of Swabia) as the place of creation for the Madrid pendants.
 - 22 Lübbecke 1991, p. 104, and note 5.
 - 23 On Eitel Friedrich II von Hohenzollern, see M. Dressel, *Graf Eitelfriedrich II. von Zollern (1452-1512)*, Wetzlar 1995.
 - 24 See H. Börsch-Supan, *Die Gemälde im Jagdschloss Grunewald*, Berlin 1964, pp. 120-121. Basing himself on the inscription on the painting, the author suggests that the portrait is posthumous, and likely based on the same source that also informed the print by Custos (see text, note 25, and our figs. 17 and 18).
 - 25 The engraving was done by the Flemish/Augsburg engraver Dominicus Custos (1560-1612) after an original drawing by the sixteenth century Italian artist Giovanni Battista Fontana (1524-1587), who worked for Ferdinand II, Archduke of Austria (1529-1595). It is included in the *Heldenbuch* of 1603, which reflected the so-called ‘Heldenrustkammer’ of Ferdinand II, a collection of weapons, armour, portraits and other items of famous knights and generals from the 15th and 16th centuries – among them Eitel Friedrich II von Hohenzollern – which the Archduke had brought together at Ambras Castle.
 - 26 Périer-d’Ieteren 2005, p. 114.
 - 27 For Van der Weyden’s portrait, see D. de Vos, *Rogier van der Weyden : Het volledige oeuvre*, Antwerp 1999, pp. 311-313, cat. no. 29; V. Bücken, in: V. Bücken, G. Steyaert, *De erfenis van Rogier van der Weyden : de schilderkunst in Brussel 1450-1520*, exh. cat. Brussels, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium 2013-2014, pp. 102-103, cat. no. 1.
 - 28 The Kisters sitter wears a so-called ‘Haube’, a headgear typically worn by married women. In fact, the German expression ‘Unter die Haube kommen’ refers to getting married. I thank Sara van Dijk, curator of textiles of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, for pointing this out to me. See for a thorough study on Renaissance marriage portraiture B. Hinz, ‘Studien zur Geschichte des Ehepaarbildnisses’, in: *Mährburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 19 (1974), pp. 139-218.



Detail of cat. no. 6

cat. no. 7

Jan van de Velde III

Haarlem 1620 – 1662 Enkhuizen or Amsterdam

Still Life with an Earthenware Jug, a Tortoise Shell Tobacco Box, a 'Gouda' Pipe, a Glass of Beer and Tobacco Smoking Implements

Signed on the ledge: Jan vande velde Fecit, and dated 1658 with Amsterdam coat of arms on the belly of the jug

Oil on panel

38.1 x 29.8 cm.

Provenance:

New York, Otto Naumann, Ltd.

Bellevue (WA), collection Theleine Scheumann (1931-2021), since 1990

Her sale, New York, Sotheby's, 26 january 2023, lot 8

This beautiful intimate composition shows a white earthenware jug with a metal lid in the form of a cup and decorated with the coat of arms of Amsterdam, a long clay pipe from Gouda, a tortoise shell tobacco box, a glass of beer and a burning wick.¹ Against a deep green background, these objects, lit from the left, are carefully composed, clustered together towards the left of a rustic wooden table. The artist contrasts translucent with solid materials, with the beautifully rendered translucent tortoise shell box, while the end of the wick can be glimpsed through the translucent

medium of the beer. The tortoise shell box is filled with tobacco, which is scattered in front of the pipe. The cast shadows, such as those of the wick, draped over the pipe and hanging off the edge of the table, creates a strong sense of three-dimensional objects in space. The olive-green colored bands around the base as well as the top of the jug and on its body were originally painted with smalt, but this blue pigment can discolor with time. Despite the Amsterdam crest, such jugs, also known as 'wapenkruiken' (jugs with coat-of-arms), were produced in Raeren, Germany,



and were exclusively made for the city of Amsterdam. The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam houses a similarly lidded jug,² while a similar jug is available at Salomon Lilian Dutch Old Master Paintings (fig. 1).³ The handcrafted beer glass or beaker was a luxury item in the 17th century, when Amsterdam was an important trading place and home to various breweries. Beer was a highly popular drink and it played a prominent role in the daily lives of the people. Local beer styles included varieties like 'witbier' (wheat beer) and 'scharrebier' (light beer), which were popular choices among the citizens of Amsterdam. The city's beer was often consumed in taverns and public houses, serving as gathering places for both locals and travelers. The Dutch brewing tradition emphasized ales, and beer was brewed using malted barley, water, hops, and yeast. The beer industry was regulated by the city authorities, and breweries had to adhere to strict guidelines to ensure the quality and safety of their products.



Fig. 1 Jug with the coat of arms of Amsterdam, Salomon Lilian Dutch Old Master Paintings



Fig. 2 Jan van de Velde III, *Still life with a Stoneware Jug and Pipe*, signed Jan van de Velde. fecit on the table and dated 1650 on the belly of the jug, oil on panel, 35.9 x 27.9 cm., The National Gallery, Washington, accession number 2019.13.1

Van de Velde began his career under the influence of such Haarlem masters as Pieter Claesz (1597-1661), but soon developed his own style. He worked in Amsterdam from 1641 until the end of his life. *Still Life with an earthenware jug, tortoise shell tobacco box, 'Gouda' pipe, glass of beer and tobacco smoking implements* is an exquisite example of the approximately only 40 paintings Van de Velde executed during his short career. Together with Jan Treck (c. 1606-1652) he introduced the present type of still life, the so called 'toebackje', tobacco still life, with smokers' paraphernalia, to Amsterdam. Although herbalists attributed healing effects to tobacco, as a stimulant it was identified with drunkenness and regarded as a sin. Bergström classifies this theme as a Vanitas still life where painter and viewer were supposed to reflect the passage of all worldly things.⁴ Other artists who painted similar still lifes include Johannes Fris (c. 1627-1672), Pieter Janssens called Elinga (1623-1682) and Edwaert Collier (1642-1708).

A comparable painting, only executed 8 years before in 1650, *Still life with a stoneware jug and pipe* was acquired in 2019 for the collection of The National Gallery in Washington (fig. 2). Another *Still Life with smokers' paraphernalia* is in the collection of The Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest (fig. 3).

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Fig. 3 Jan van de Velde III, *Still Life with Smokers' Paraphernalia*, trace of signature, oil on panel, 43.4 x 32.4 cm., The Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, inv. no. 190

Notes

- 1 Clay Gouda pipes were white, with a long slender stem and a small bowl. They were produced from 1617 onwards in the Gouda region where pipe clay was produced in huge quantities.
- 2 Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, object number BK-KOG-555.
- 3 And exhibited with the painting at TEFAF, Maastricht, 2024.
- 4 I. Bergström, *Dutch Still Life Painting in the Seventeenth Century*, London 1956, p. 154.

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