



Frans Hals
Dutch, c. 1582/1583 - 1666

Adriaen van Ostade

1646/1648

oil on canvas

overall: 94 x 75 cm (37 x 29 1/2 in.)

Andrew W. Mellon Collection 1937.1.70

ENTRY

This masterful painting by Frans Hals, which is neither signed nor dated, is unrecorded prior to 1919, when it appeared at a London auction as a self-portrait by the Dutch Italianate painter Nicolaes Pietersz Berchem (Dutch, 1620 - 1683).[1] The identity of the sitter as Berchem cannot be sustained any more than can the attribution to that artist. Berchem's self-portrait drawing of about 1660 represents a heavier-set person with a more rounded face than that seen in this portrait [fig. 1]. Instead, the artist whom Hals has portrayed here is Adriaen van Ostade (Dutch, 1610 - 1685), the renowned Haarlem painter of rural life. The connection between this painting and Ostade was made by Claus Grimm, who compared this image to two established likenesses of the artist.[2] The first is a small-scale self-portrait in the background of Van Ostade's group portrait of the De Goyer family (Museum Bredius, The Hague) of about 1650.[3] An even more striking comparison is Jacob Gole's mezzotint portrait of Van Ostade that was executed after a lost painting by the latter's pupil Cornelis Dusart (Dutch, 1660 - 1704) [fig. 2].[4] As Eduard Trautscholdt recognized, Dusart must have based his portrait on an earlier representation of the artist; Dusart—who was born in 1660, when his master was fifty years old—depicted Van Ostade as a considerably younger man than he could ever have known.[5] Moreover, he portrayed the artist rather anachronistically in a kimono, scarf, and wig, fashionable garb for the late seventeenth century. Grimm convincingly concluded that the National Gallery of Art's painting by Hals was Dusart's model. Its remarkable resemblance to the image in Gole's mezzotint when reversed (thereby reproducing the pose in Dusart's painting) argues for the direct connection between the two works.[6]

Arnold Houbraken writes that Van Ostade was Hals' pupil for a time.[7] If Houbraken is correct, this apprenticeship must have occurred before 1634, when Van Ostade became a member of the Saint Luke's Guild in Haarlem. Later contacts between the two men are not documented, but they were among the preeminent artists in Haarlem during the middle decades of the century. Hals seems to have had close personal relations with Haarlem's artistic community and he portrayed a number of his colleagues. In addition to this portrait of Adriaen van Ostade, Hals' surviving portraits of identifiable artists are those of Vincent Laurensz van der Vinne (Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto) and Frans Post (Worcester Art Museum).[8]

Hals represents Van Ostade as a gentleman, dressed in fashionable clothes. The pose is similar to one Hals used for the wealthy Rotterdam merchant Paulus Verschuur in 1643 [fig. 3].[9] Both subjects hold their right glove in their left hand, a variant of a gesture seen frequently in Hals' portraits. While the exact meaning of this motif is not known, the symbolism of gloves was apparently a well-understood aspect of seventeenth-century decorum. Smith writes that to take off one's gloves was a sign of friendship,[10] and it may be significant that in both of these instances the right hand, the one used for greeting, has been ungloved. Its position, with the palm exposed to the viewer, reinforces the quality of openness and forthrightness evident in these works.

Although Seymour Slive dates this work in the early 1650s, an earlier date seems probable. The thematic and compositional relationships already noted between the Washington painting and the portrait of Paulus Verschuur from 1643 are also found with other works of the mid-1640s, specifically the *Portrait of a Standing Man*, c. 1645, in the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.[11] The looser handling of the paint in the Washington picture, most evident in the abstract, angular brushwork in the gloves but also visible in the broken contour of the silhouetted right arm and in the bold highlights along the nose and under the right eye, suggests, however, a somewhat later date of 1646/1648.[12] These stylistic characteristics can be seen in a number of other works from this period, among them the *Seated Man Holding a Hat*, c. 1648–1650 (Taft Museum, Cincinnati).[13] By the early 1650s Hals' style had become less agitated, as a comparison with the National Gallery of Art's *Portrait of a Gentleman* demonstrates. At that time he blocked in the silhouettes of his figures with broad, angular strokes rather than with the broken contours that characterize his work from the late 1640s. The explicit virtuosity of his technique for rendering Van Ostade's gloves with rapidly applied diagonal accents later gave way to simpler forms with more measured rhythms.

A date of 1646/1648 also seems compatible with Van Ostade's age. In 1646 he would have been thirty-six years old, and the image seems to represent a man in his mid-thirties. In 1647 Van Ostade was elected to be one of the headmen of the Saint Luke's Guild in Haarlem, so the portrait may have been intended to commemorate this significant moment in the artist's career. While many of Hals' three-quarter-length standing male figures have a female pendant, no evidence exists that one ever accompanied this portrait. At the time Hals painted it, Van Ostade had no wife: his first spouse had died in 1642, and he did not remarry until 1657.^[14]

Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.

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COMPARATIVE FIGURES



fig. 1 Nicolaes Pietersz Berchem, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1660, pen and ink and wash, Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam. Photo © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



fig. 2 Jacob Gole, *Adriaen van Ostade*, c. 1685, mezzotint after a lost Cornelis Dusart painting, Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam. Photo © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



fig. 3 Frans Hals, *Paulus Verschuur*, 1643, oil on canvas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Archer M. Huntington in memory of his father, Collis Potter Huntington, 1926. Photo © The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY

NOTES

- [1] An old label from the back of the painting (now in National Gallery of Art curatorial files) reads: "3. Portrait of Berghem, the celebrated Painter. By himself. Small half-length, curved gilt frame." A painted inscription on the back reads "Nicholas Berghem." The identification may have been made by an English owner during the nineteenth century, when Dutch Italianate paintings were in vogue. Since collectors and connoisseurs often associated an artist's appearance with his type of subject matter, the identification of this handsome and refined sitter as Berchem, a painter of elegant views of the Roman campagna, is understandable.
- [2] Claus Grimm, "Ein meisterliches Künstlerporträt: Frans Hals' Ostade-Bildnis," *Oud-Holland* 85 (1970): 170–176.
- [3] Albert Blankert, *Museum Bredius: Catalogus van de Schilderijen en*

Tekeningen (The Hague, 1978), 95–96, no. 121.

- [4] Claus Grimm, “Ein meisterliches Künstlerporträt: Frans Hals’ Ostade-Bildnis,” *Oud-Holland* 85 (1970): 173.
- [5] Eduard Trautscholdt, “Zu einer Bildniszeichnung des Adriaen van Ostade,” *Miscellanea I.Q. van Regteren Altena* (Amsterdam, 1969), 153.
- [6] It has been proposed that a painting in the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, *Seated Man Holding a Branch* (inv. no. 15, 901), may also represent Van Ostade. The attribution of this work and the identification of the sitter, however, have been debated. The work is attributed to Frans Hals by Seymour Slive (in *Frans Hals*, 3 vols. [London, 1970–1974], 3: no. 155, and in *Frans Hals* [Washington, DC, 1989], 298, no. 59), but to Frans Hals the Younger by Claus Grimm in “Frans Hals und seine Schule,” *Münchner Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst* 22 (1971): 162, no. 15, 171, repro. 25, and to Workshop (Group B) by Grimm in *Frans Hals: The Complete Work*, trans. Jürgen Riehle (New York, 1990), 292. Although the model shares a certain likeness to the sitter in the Washington painting and even more closely resembles the previously mentioned mezzotint by Jacob Gold after a lost painting by Cornelis Dusart, no firm conclusion can be made about the sitter’s identity (see Slive, *Frans Hals* [London], 3: fig. 46; Ernst Scheyer, “Portraits of the Brothers Van Ostade,” *Arts Quarterly* 2 [1939]: 134–141). If the Ottawa portrait does represent Van Ostade, its proposed date of 1645 presents some difficulties, for Van Ostade was born in 1610 and the figure appears older than thirty-five. Slive, *Frans Hals* (London), 3: fig. 47, discusses a copy of a lost Van Ostade self-portrait by Jan van Rossum (active c. 1654–c. 1673) now in the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin; see Homan Potterton, *Dutch Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Paintings in the National Gallery of Ireland: A Complete Catalogue* (Dublin, 1986), 132–133, no. 623, fig. 141. No conclusions about the identification of the Washington sitter can be made, however, from this image.
- [7] Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam, 1718–1721; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), 1:347.
- [8] Seymour Slive, ed., *Frans Hals*, 3 vols. (London, 1970–1974), 3: nos. 203, 206. Ironically, Hals’ works representing a painter with the tools of his craft have remained unidentified (Art Institute of Chicago, inv. no. 94.1023, see Slive, *Frans Hals* [London], 3: no. 164; and Frick Collection, New York, see Slive, *Frans Hals* [London], 3: no. 186). Unfortunately, his portraits of fellow-painters Jan Miense Molenaer, Judith Leyster, Thomas Wyck, and Jan van de Cappelle, and of the painter-architect Jacob van Campen, are now lost. At a College Art Association meeting on February 11, 2010, Paul Crenshaw has, however, proposed that *Portrait of a Painter Holding a Brush* in the Frick Collection is a pendant to *Portrait of a Seated Woman Holding a Fan*

in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and that the sitters are Jan Miense Molenaer and Judith Leyster. See Slive, *Frans Hals* (London), 3:96–97, nos. 186, 187.

- [9] Seymour Slive, ed., *Frans Hals*, 3 vols. (London, 1970–1974), 3: no. 144.
- [10] David R. Smith, *Masks of Wedlock: Seventeenth-Century Dutch Marriage Portraiture* (Ann Arbor, 1982), 78. See also Berent Schwineköper, *Der Handschuh im Recht, Ämterweisen, Brauch und Volksglauben* (Berlin, 1938), 127–128.
- [11] National Gallery Scotland, *Paintings in the National Gallery of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1976), 47, no. 691; Seymour Slive, ed., *Frans Hals*, 3 vols. (London, 1970–1974), 3: no. 156, note.
- [12] Claus Grimm, *Frans Hals: Entwicklung Werkanalyse, Gesamtkatalog* (Berlin, 1972), 106, dates the painting 1643–1644; Seymour Slive, ed., *Frans Hals*, 3 vols. (London, 1970–1974), 3: 99, no. 193, dates it 1650–1652.
- [13] Seymour Slive, ed., *Frans Hals*, 3 vols. (London, 1970–1974), 3: no. 173, fig. 268, note.
- [14] I would like to express my appreciation to H. Rodney Nevitt Jr., for his assistance in preparing this entry.

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The support, a fine-weight, plain-weave fabric, has been lined with the tacking margins trimmed. Cusping indicates no change in dimensions. Lining has reinforced the impression of the canvas texture in the paint surface. The smooth, white ground layer is visible through the transparent background paint, appearing light brown to the eye.

Paint is applied freely in thin layers defined by broad, distinct, sure brushstrokes. A dark layer was applied first to serve as a color for the background and an underpaint layer for the jacket, with reserves left for the face and hands. The face, collar, hands, and gloves were brought to a higher degree of finish in fuller bodied paint with brushwork blended wet-into-wet. X-radiographs show a minor adjustment to the right half of the collar, which was initially straighter. The entire collar may have been slightly smaller.

Two small losses are found above and below the mouth on the left side, along with scattered small losses in the lower half of the jacket. The black paint of the jacket is moderately abraded and a 3-centimeter section of hair to the left of the face is

severely abraded. The painting was treated in 1990 to remove discolored varnish and inpainting.

PROVENANCE

Buckston family, Sutton on the Hill, Derbyshire; (sale, Sotheby & Co., London, 5-6 May 1919, 2nd day, no. 285);^[1] Brown, acting for (Thos. Agnew & Sons, Ltd., Arthur J. Sulley & Co., and Colnaghi & Co., London);^[2] purchased 9 May 1919 by (M. Knoedler & Co., London and New York); sold 1 November 1919 to Andrew W. Mellon, Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C.;^[3] deeded 28 December 1934 to The A.W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, Pittsburgh; gift 1937 to NGA.

[1] In this auction the picture was listed as *Portrait of the Artist* by Nicholas Berghem [Berchem]. The auction catalogue states that the painting was "The Property of a Gentleman". Francis Russell of Christie's kindly provided the name of the family that consigned the painting (letter of 10 March 2003 to Arthur Wheelock, in NGA curatorial files).

[2] The fact that the purchase was by joint account of the three dealers is given in the Public Collections section of The Getty Provenance Index Databases. The painting was Agnew's joint account number J-1817 and Colnaghi's number A-720. Colnaghi also sold one third of their share to H.M. Clark. Christopher Kingzett of Agnew's confirmed Agnew's purchase of the painting at the 1919 sale, but does not mention the joint account with Sulley and Colnaghi (letter, 7 March 1984, to Arthur Wheelock, in NGA curatorial files).

[3] Letter, 14 February 1984, Nancy Little, Librarian at M. Knoedler & Co., to Arthur Wheelock, in NGA curatorial files. Knoedler's recorded their purchase as from Agnew's; the painting was Knoedler stock number 14774.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

1925 Paintings by Old Masters from Pittsburgh Collections, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, 1925, no. 24, as Nicholas Berghen [Berchem].

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