



Frans Hals
Dutch, c. 1582/1583 - 1666

Portrait of a Young Man

1646/1648

oil on canvas

overall: 68 x 55.4 cm (26 3/4 x 21 13/16 in.)

framed: 103.2 x 91.4 x 14.6 cm (40 5/8 x 36 x 5 3/4 in.)

Inscription: center right with double monogram: FHFH

Andrew W. Mellon Collection 1937.1.71

ENTRY

In this bust-length portrait, a portly young man rests his elbow on the back of his chair while he turns and looks directly at the viewer. His round, somewhat pudgy face is framed by shoulder-length curly hair and a black hat that rests squarely on his head. His black jacket is enlivened by a flat white collar with intricate lace edging.

Hals seems to have favored this portrait convention because of its relative informality. The momentary, turning pose and the rapid and bold brushstrokes enhance the lifelike quality of the image. As discussed in *Willem Coymans*, Hals used this pose at many stages of his career, but particularly in the 1640s. Indeed, the National Gallery of Art's *Willem Coymans*, signed and dated 1645, is one of the closest parallels to this image. Not only are the poses alike, but the paintings are also similar in the way that Hals modeled the faces more firmly than the broader, more suggestively rendered costumes. On the basis of such relationships, Seymour Slive has dated this painting about 1645.[1]

Minor variations in technique between these portraits, however, suggest that *Portrait of a Young Man* must date slightly later than the portrait of Willem Coymans. Hals has animated this sitter's face with rapidly applied light accents over the broad flesh tones that define the nose, cheeks, lower lip, and forehead. These strokes, just as those that articulate the eyebrows and mustache, are less integrated into the structure of the face than those in the Coymans portrait. Similarly, whereas in the Coymans portrait Hals conveys a sense of the translucent material from which the collar and sleeve are made, and of the elegantly brocaded pattern on the jacket, in the abstract rendering of the costume in *Portrait of a*

Young Man neither the material character of the lace collar nor the lace pattern are suggested to such a degree. Finally, the lion's-head finial of the chair is depicted with a few wavy strokes that give little information about its structure.

The precise period of execution for this work is difficult to determine because Hals dated so few paintings after 1645. A probable date, however, is 1646/1648. Both the style of the collar and shape of the hat were in fashion in these years, as was shoulder-length hair. Hals' portrait *Adriaen van Ostade*, which can be dated about 1646/1648, shows comparable characteristics in the style of costume as well as the abstract way in which it is rendered. That portrait also exhibits the use of highlights to enliven the otherwise firmly structured face and its features.

The double monogram, unique in Hals' work, has been the subject of multiple interpretations. Slive suggests that a second monogram might have been added after the first one had been painted out for some reason.[2] The two monograms, however, overlap, and there is no evidence of an intervening paint layer between them. In the eighteenth century the double monogram was seen to indicate both the artist and the sitter. In 1736 Horace Walpole described the painting as a self-portrait of Frans Hals,[3] an identification that was repeated in an engraving (in reverse) after the painting, published in 1777.[4] This identification was followed by subsequent Hermitage catalogers. Later, when it became obvious that the sitter was too young to be Frans Hals, he was identified as Frans Hals the Younger (1618–1669).[5] Although Hals' son would have been the appropriate age for this portrait, no other supporting evidence for this identification exists, so the identity of the sitter and the reason for the double monogram remain mysteries.

Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.

April 24, 2014

NOTES

[1] Seymour Slive, *Frans Hals*, 3 vols. (London, 1970–1974), 3:86, no. 167.

[2] Seymour Slive, *Frans Hals*, 3 vols. (London, 1970–1974), 3:86, no. 167. See also Wilhelm von Bode, *Studien zur Geschichte der holländischen Malerei* (Braunschweig, 1883), 90, no. 128. Bode speculated, on the basis of the monogram, that the artist might be Frans Hals' son Harmen Hals, but, after Bredius discovered that this artist's monogram was different in character,

Bode immediately rejected his own hypothesis.

- [3] Horace Walpole, "A Catalogue of the Right Honble. Sir Robert Walpole's Collection of Pictures," unsigned autograph manuscript (New York, 1736), Pierpont Morgan Library, The Morgan Library and Museum, PML 7586. He identified 430 paintings in his father's various houses. In the list entitled "A Catalogue of Sir Robert Walpole's Pictures at Chelsea," fol. 33–34, appears: "Francis Halls, Master to Godfrey Kneller . . . Francis Halls."
- [4] The engraving was made by J. B. Michel. According to Seymour Slive. *Frans Hals*, 3 vols. (London, 1970–1974), 3:86, the print is inscribed: "FRANCIS HALLS. / In the Common Parlour at Houghton / Size of the Picture 1F[oot] 3 ¼ I[nches] by 1F[oot] 7 1/2 I[nches] high / Published May 1st, 1777 by John Boydell Engraver in Cheapside, London. / F. Halls Pixit. G. Farington del. J.B. Michel sculpsit."
- [5] Petr Petrovich Semenoff, *Études sur l'histoire de la peinture néerlandaise*, 2 vols. (Saint Petersburg, 1885), 1:254, and Andrei Ivanovich Somov, *Ermitage Impérial: Catalogue de la galerie des tableaux*, 3rd. ed., 2 vols. (Saint Petersburg, 1901), 2:139–140, no. 770.

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The original support is a plain-woven fabric composed of heavy threads irregularly spun with numerous slubs, loose ends, and weave faults. It has been lined with most of the original tacking margins retained. Pressure upon lining has caused an emphasis of the coarse canvas texture and flattening of impasto. The support was laced onto a temporary strainer for priming. Remnants of the thick laces remain along the left and right edges. Cusping patterns also suggest that the primed fabric was re-laced to the strainer for painting before attachment to a stretcher. The support is sound, aside from a small hole to the right of the head.

A warm tan granular ground layer is visible between broad brushstrokes of paint, which was applied in thin layers worked rapidly wet-into-wet and modeled with sharp, unblended brushstrokes. The background was applied first, with a reserve left for the face, which was painted next, followed by the clothing. The hair was worked over the face to define its precise contours.

Scattered small losses are found overall, particularly along the edges. The bottom edge is ragged and damaged. Abrasion is slight. The painting underwent conservation treatment in 2007 to remove discolored varnish and inpainting.

PROVENANCE

Sir Robert Walpole, 1st earl of Orford [1676-1745], Houghton Hall, Norfolk, by 1736;^[1] by inheritance to his son, Robert Walpole, 2nd earl of Orford [1700-1751], Houghton Hall; by inheritance to his son, George Walpole, 3rd earl of Orford [1730-1791], Houghton Hall; sold 1779 through Count Aleksei Semonovich Musin-Pushkin, Russian ambassador to England, to Catherine II, empress of Russia [1729-1796], Saint Petersburg; Imperial Hermitage Gallery, Saint Petersburg; sold February 1931 through (Matthiesen Gallery, Berlin; P. & D. Colnaghi & Co., London; and M. Knoedler & Co., New York) to Andrew W. Mellon, Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C.; deeded 1 May 1937 to The A.W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, Pittsburgh; gift 1937 to NGA.

[1] Horace Walpole, "A Catalogue of the Right Honble. Sir Robert Walpole's Collection of Pictures," 1736, autograph manuscript unsigned, pp. 33-34, PML 7586, The Morgan Library and Museum, New York.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

1996 Houghton Hall: The Prime Minister, The Empress and The Heritage, Castle Museum Norwich; Kenwood House, London, 1996-1997, no. 12, repro., as Portrait of a Seated Man.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1736 Walpole, Horace. *A Catalogue of the Right Honorable Sir Robert Walpole's Collection of Pictures*. Unsigned autograph manuscript. Pierpont Morgan Library. The Morgan Library and Museum, PML 7586. New York, 1736: 33-34.
- 1747 Walpole, Horace. *Aedes Walpolianae or A Description of the Collection of Pictures at Houghton Hall in Norfolk*. London, 1747: 40.
- 1809 Gilpin, William. *Observations on Several Parts of the Counties of Cambridge, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex*. London, 1809: 69.
- 1838 Imperial Hermitage Museum. *Livret de la Galerie Impériale de l'Ermitage*

- de Saint Petersburg*. Saint Petersburg, 1838: 254, no. 26, as *Self-Portrait*.
- 1863 Köhne, Baron Bernhard de. *Ermitage Impérial, Catalogue de la Galerie des Tableaux*. Saint Petersburg, 1863: 165, no. 770, as *Portrait of Frans Hals*.
- 1864 Waagen, Gustav Friedrich. *Die Gemäldesammlung in der kaiserlichen Ermitage zu St. Petersburg nebst Bemerkungen über andere dortige Kunstsammlungen*. Munich, 1864: 172, no. 770.
- 1870 Köhne, Baron Bernhard de. *Ermitage Impérial: Catalogue de la Galerie des Tableaux*. 3 vols. 2nd ed. Saint Petersburg, 1870: 2:123, no. 770.
- 1883 Bode, Wilhelm von. *Studien zur Geschichte der holländischen Malerei*. Braunschweig, 1883: 90, 101, no. 128.
- 1885 Semenoff, Petr Petrovich. *Études sur l'histoire de la peinture néerlandaise*. 2 vols. Saint Petersburg, 1885: 1:254, as *Portrait of Frans Hals the Younger*.
- 1895 Somov, Andrei Ivanovich. *Ermitage Impérial: Catalogue de la Galerie des Tableaux*. 2 vols. 3rd ed. Saint Petersburg, 1895: 2:122-123, no. 770, repro.
- 1896 Knackfuss, Hermann. *Frans Hals*. Bielefeld and Leipzig, 1896: 52, repro.
- 1901 Somov, Andrei Ivanovich. *Ermitage Impérial: Catalogue de la Galerie des Tableaux*. 2 vols. 4th ed. Saint Petersburg, 1901: 2:139-140, no. 770, repro.
- 1902 Davies, Gerald S. *Frans Hals*. London, 1902: 144, no. 770.
- 1907 Hofstede de Groot, Cornelis. *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century*. 8 vols. Translated by Edward G. Hawke. London, 1907-1927: 3(1910):88.
- 1908 Davies, Gerald S. *Frans Hals*. Reprint. London, 1908: 139, no. 770.
- 1909 Moes, Ernst Wilhelm. *Frans Hals: sa vie et son oeuvre*. Translated by J. de Bosschere. Brussels, 1909: 108, no. 180 or 182.
- 1909 Wrangell, Baron Nicolas. *Les Chefs-d'Oeuvre de la Galerie de Tableaux de l'Ermitage Impérial à St. Pétersbourg*. London, 1909: 145, repro.
- 1912 Péladan, Joséphin. *Frans Hals 1580(?) - 1666*. Paris, 1912: 89-90, repro. opposite 162.
- 1914 Bode, Wilhelm von, and Moritz Julius Binder. *Frans Hals: His Life and Work*. 2 vols. Translated by Maurice W. Brockwell. Berlin, 1914: 2:15, no. 213, pl. 136.
- 1914 Bode, Wilhelm von, and Moritz Julius Binder. *Frans Hals: Sein Leben und seine Werke*. 2 vols. Berlin, 1914: 2:62, no. 213, pl. 136.
- 1918 Wrangell, Baron Nicolas. *Die Meisterwerke der Gemälde-Galerie in der Ermitage zu St. Petersburg*. Edited by Georg Korczewski. 2nd ed. Munich, 1918: 145, repro.
- 1921 Valentiner, Wilhelm R. *Frans Hals: des meisters Gemälde in 318 Abbildungen*. Klassiker der Kunst in Gesamtausgaben 28. Stuttgart and Berlin, 1921: 320, no. 219, repro.

- 1923 Knackfuss, Hermann. *Frans Hals*. Reprint. Bielefeld, 1923: 61, 64, repro.
- 1923 Valentiner, Wilhelm R. *Frans Hals: des Meisters Gemälde in 322 Abbildungen*. Klassiker der Kunst in Gesamtausgaben 28. 2nd ed. Stuttgart, Berlin, and Leipzig, 1923: 320, 234, repro.
- 1923 Weiner, Peter Paul von. *Meisterwerke der Gemäldesammlung in der Eremitage zu Petrograd*. Revised ed. Munich, 1923: 117, repro.
- 1930 Dülberg, Franz. *Frans Hals: Ein Leben und ein Werk*. Stuttgart, 1930: 186.
- 1936 Valentiner, Wilhelm R. *Frans Hals Paintings in America*. Westport, Connecticut, 1936: no. 91, repro.
- 1941 National Gallery of Art. *Preliminary Catalogue of Paintings and Sculpture*. Washington, 1941: 95-96, no. 71.
- 1941 Trivas, Numa S. *The Paintings of Frans Hals*. New York, 1941: 55, no. 92, repro. no. 123.
- 1942 National Gallery of Art. *Book of illustrations*. 2nd ed. Washington, 1942: no. 71, repro. 24, 240.
- 1946 Gratama, Gerrit David. *Frans Hals*. The Hague, 1946: 98, repro.
- 1949 National Gallery of Art. *Paintings and Sculpture from the Mellon Collection*. Washington, 1949 (reprinted 1953 and 1958): 78, repro.
- 1963 Walker, John. *National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.* New York, 1963 (reprinted 1964 in French, German, and Spanish): 1963, 311, repro.
- 1965 National Gallery of Art. *Summary Catalogue of European Paintings and Sculpture*. Washington, 1965: 65.
- 1968 National Gallery of Art. *European Paintings and Sculpture, Illustrations*. Washington, 1968: 58, repro.
- 1970 Slive, Seymour. *Frans Hals*. 3 vols. National Gallery of Art Kress Foundation Studies in the History of European Art. London, 1970–1974: 1(1970):52, 160-161, 193; 2(1970):fig. 256; 3(1974):86-87, fig. 60 (monogram).
- 1972 Grimm, Claus. *Frans Hals: Entwicklung, Werkanalyse, Gesamtkatalog*. Berlin, 1972: 107, 205, no. 134, fig. 150.
- 1974 Montagni, E.C. *L'opera completa di Frans Hals*. Classici dell'Arte. Milan, 1974: 105, no. 171, repro.
- 1975 National Gallery of Art. *European paintings: An Illustrated Summary Catalogue*. Washington, 1975: 170, repro.
- 1975 Walker, John. *National Gallery of Art, Washington*. New York, 1975: 268, no. 352, repro.
- 1976 Gerson, Horst. "The Frans Hals Catalogue." *The Burlington Magazine* 118 (June 1976): 422-424.
- 1976 Montagni, E.C. *Tout l'oeuvre peint de Frans Hals*. Translated by Simone Darses. Les classiques de l'art. Paris, 1976: no. 171, repro.
- 1981 Wheelock, Arthur K., Jr. *Jan Vermeer*. New York, 1981: 14-15, fig. 6.
- 1984 Walker, John. *National Gallery of Art, Washington*. Rev. ed. New York, 1984: 268, no. 346, color repro.
- 1985 Jackson-Stops, Gervase. *The Treasure Houses of Britain: Five Hundred*

- Years of Private Patronage and Art Collecting*. Exh. cat. National Gallery of Art, Washington. New Haven, 1985: 324.
- 1985 National Gallery of Art. *European Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue*. Washington, 1985: 197, repro.
- 1988 Wheelock, Arthur K., Jr. *Jan Vermeer*. Masters of Art. 2nd rev. ed. New York, 1988: 100, fig. 6.
- 1990 Broos, Ben P. J., ed. *Great Dutch Paintings from America*. Exh. cat. Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. The Hague and Zwolle, 1990: 391.
- 1990 Grimm, Claus. *Frans Hals: The Complete Work*. Translated by Jürgen Riehle. New York, 1990: 241-242, 257, fig. 105a, 288, no. 129, repro.
- 1991 Kopper, Philip. *America's National Gallery of Art: A Gift to the Nation*. New York, 1991: 93, color repro.
- 1995 Wheelock, Arthur K., Jr. *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century*. The Collections of the National Gallery of Art Systematic Catalogue. Washington, 1995: 83-85, color repro. 84.
- 1995 Wheelock, Arthur K., Jr. *Vermeer and the Art of Painting*. New Haven, 1995: 123, fig. 86.
- 1996 Moore, Andrew W. *Houghton Hall: the Prime Minister, the Empress and the Heritage*. Exh. cat. Norwich Castle Museum; Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood. London, 1996: 95, fig. 12, repro.
- 2000 Il'in, Nikolas, and Natalia Semënova. *Prodannye sokrovishcha Rossii [Sold Treasures of Russia]*. Moscow, 2000: 157, repro.
- 2002 Moore, Andrew, and Larissa Dukelskaya. *A Capital Collection: Houghton Hall and The Hermitage*. Exh. cat. Somerset House, London. New Haven and London, 2002: 249, repro.
- 2003 Moore, Andrew. "Sir Robert Walpole: A Prime Minister Collects Dutch and Flemish Art." In *Dutch and Flemish artists in Britain, 1550-1800*. Edited by Juliette Roding. Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek 13. Leiden, 2003: 293-294, repro.
- 2009 Odom, Anne, and Wendy R. Salmond, eds. *Treasures into Tractors: The Selling of Russia's Cultural Heritage, 1918-1938*. Washington, D.C., 2009: repro. xii, 90, 103 n. 45, 135 n. 62.
- 2011 Fiedler, Susanne, and Torsten Knuth. "Vexierbilder einer Biographie: Dr. Heinz Mansfeld (1899-1959)." *Mecklenburgische Jahrbücher* 126 (2011): 307.

To cite: Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Frans Hals/*Portrait of a Young Man*/1646/1648," *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century*, NGA Online Editions, <http://purl.org/nga/collection/artobject/78> (accessed April 24, 2014).