

FRANS HALS

Dutch school, ca. 1581/85 - 1666

Frans Hals, the son of a cloth worker from Mechelen, Franchoy Hals, was probably born in Antwerp between 1581 and 1585. The earliest reference to the presence of the Hals family in Haarlem comes in March 1591, when Frans's brother Dirck was baptized there. Hals was a pupil of Carel van Mander, probably around 1600-1603, and in 1610 he joined the Guild of Saint Luke in Haarlem. The earliest dated painting of his which survives is from 1611, and in September of that year the artist's son was baptized; his first wife, Annetje Harmander, died four years later, leaving two children. In 1616 Hals painted the first of six large group-portraits of militia-men, the Banquet of the Officers of the Saint George Civic Guards of Haarlem. He is mentioned as being in Antwerp that year, from about August until November. He was an associate at this point of the Haarlem society of rhetoricians, Die Wijngaertranken --an affiliation which he maintained until 1625. In 1617 he married his second wife, Lysbeth Reyniers, by whom he would have eight children. In 1629 he is mentioned as having cleaned and "changed" paintings from the Commandery of Saint John (possibly by Geertgen tot Sint Jans). In 1633 he was commissioned to paint the Corporalship of Captain Reynier Resal at Amsterdam, but refused to finish the work in Amsterdam, and it was finally completed by Pieter Codde in 1637. 1644 saw him serving as a member of the board of the Saint Luke's Guild of Haarlem. In 1654 a baker seized his property and five paintings on account of an unpaid debt. The Saint Luke's Guild exempted him in 1661, on account of old age, from paying his annual dues, and the next year the burgo-masters of Haarlem made him a gift of fifty florins, followed by an annual subsidy, which was increased from 150 to 200 guilders in 1663. In 1664 he painted the Governors and Lady Governors of the Old Men's Almshouse, for which he appears to have been handsomely paid. He was buried in Haarlem in September 1666. Besides the group-portraits mentioned, he did single portraits and genres figures. The stories that he was dissolute and a drunkard are all to be distrusted as later

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extrapolated from the subjects of his most popular paintings.

Self-Portrait

oil on panel, 13 x 11 ins.

Condition

Good

Provenance

Königlichen Gemäldegalerie, Dresden (1722 inv., no.A 191^①;
sold after 1920) ; Silbermann-Gallerie, New York ; H.Klaus,
Minneapolis^②. Acquired by Dr Clowes in 19 .

Literature

Katalog der Königlichen Gemäldegalerie zu Dresden, 1868
ed., p.214, no.940 ; 1880 ed., no.1020 ; 1887-1920 eds., no. 1360 ;
W.Bode, Studien zur Geschichte der Hollandischen Malerei, Brunswick,
1883, p.87, n.1 ; C.Hoftsede de Groot, A Catalogue Raisonné of
the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth
Century, tr.E.G.Hawke, 8 vols., London, 1907-27 (also in German),
III, 1910, p.46, no.148-1 ; Fr. Reid, Das Selbstbildnis, Berlin,
1931, pl.55 (?^③) ; W.R.Valentiner, "New Additions to the Work
of Frans Hals", Art in America, 23, 1935, pp.89f., 102 no.20 and
fig.4 ; E.Richardson, "The Frans Hals Exhibit", Bull. of Detroit
Institute of Arts, 14, 1935, p.59 (ill.) ; W.R.Valentiner,
Frans Hals Paintings in America, Westport, Conn., 1936 (no paging),
no.88, ill. ; L.Goldscheider, Funfhundert Selbst Porträts, Vienna,
1936 (English ed., 1937), no.162 ; K.G.Boon, Het Zelfportret in
de Nederlandsche en Vlaemsche Schilderkunst, Amsterdam, 1947,
pl.23 ; S.Slive, Cat. of Frans Hals exhibition, Municipal Museum,
Haarlem, 1962, p.68, no.58 ; H.van Hall, Portretten van
Nederlandsche Beeldende Kunstenaars, Amsterdam, 1963, p.125,
no.820.9.

Exhibita

Exhibited

Fifty Paintings by Frans Hals, Detroit Institute of Arts, 1935, no.49 ; Dutch Paintings, Etchings, Drawings, Delftware of the Seventeenth Century, John Herron Art Museum, Indianapolis, Feb.-Apr. 1937, no.20 ; Frans Hals-Tentoonstelling, Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Jul.-Sept.1937, no.98 ; Masterpieces of Art, New York World's Fair, 1939, no.188 ; Frans Hals and Rembrandt, Los Angeles County Museum, Nov.-Dec.1947, no.19 ; W.R.Valentiner Memorial Exhibition, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, Apr.-May 1959, no.67 ; ^{Ind., 1957, no.35;} Haarlem, 1962 (see lit.).

Versions

There are at least fifteen versions or copies of this portrait, including the following ones :

1. Denver Museum, Colorado (N.S.Trivas, The Paintings of Frans Hals, Phaidon Press, 1941, app.7, pl.158)
2. Metropolitan Museum, New York ; from Friedsam colln. 13 x 11 ins (Hofstede de Groot, opcit. no.148 ; Valentiner, 1935, fig.5).
3. Helsingfors Museum
4. Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem. Roundel, 17 ins. in diameter (1960 cat., no.133)
5. Lathom sale, Christie's, Jun.11, 1926, no.6
6. Fischer sale, Lucerne, Aug.23-25, 1928, no.208. 23 x 19 cm.

There is every reason to think that this is a portrait of Hals -- in fact that it represents, or is based on, the only surviving independent image of the artist painted by himself⁽⁵⁾. There is a strong resemblance to the artist's features as they appear at the back left in the Group Portrait of the Saint George Militia Company⁽⁶⁾, and the multiplication of the image (see under versions) suggests that there was an early tradition that it was Hals's own portrait. The earliest dated reference to the image as a self-portrait comes in 1754, when Cornelis van Noorde reproduced it in the form of a watercolor, dated that year, and inscribed "ipse pinxit"⁽⁶⁾; that in turn formed the basis for a mezzotint by the same artist, dated 1767.

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The Clowes version was described by Bode (1883) as a copy, possibly by one of Hals's sons, of the version now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York (no longer accepted as by Hals), and was also catalogued by Hofstede de Groot (1910) as a copy. Valentiner then published it as a work by Hals, dating it initially (1935) not much later than 1645⁽⁷⁾, and subsequently (1936) around 1648-50. Slive, who catalogued the work (1962) as the best of the known versions and dated it similarly, has subsequently expressed the view (orally)⁽⁸⁾ that it is not acceptable as being by Hals himself. On the basis of quality and handling, the compiler concurs in this view.

Notes.

1. According to Valentiner (1935 and 1936 ; see lit.), the work appeared in the 1710 inventory, but this is not confirmed by any of the Dresden catalogues. According to those catalogues, it was acquired by Raschke, and taken out of the storerooms in 1861.
2. See Time, Jan.21, 1935, p.25 for this provenance.
3. Possibly not the same work ; no whereabouts are given.
4. The half-length Portrait of a Man, from the colln. of Frau Gisola Kemperdick, Kaster, Cologne, sold at Christie's, Nov.26, 1965, no.70, was identified there as a self-portrait, by comparison with the Clowes painting. This identification appears dubious and is not accepted by either H.P.Baard ("Wedergeboote en Lotgevallen van de 'Hotinov-Hals'", Oud Holland, 80, 1965, p.214, where the Clowes painting is compared ; English summary, p.216) or S.Slive (statement to the compiler, 1967). Valentiner's views (see his 1935 article) as to other works being self-portraits have not won acceptance since then.
5. See Slive, 1962, fig. 9
6. See Slive's cat. entry. The watercolor, unpublished

Notes, cont.

(Municipal Archives, Haarlem, no.6414) shows the portrait in an oval frame supported by two putti. One of these bears the arms of Haarlem and the other has a palette at his feet, while a winged figure of Fame blowing a trumpet crown; the portrait with a laurel wreath. These iconographic details, together with the inscription ("he painted it himself") make it clear that van Noorde took the work to be a self-portrait.

7. In the Detroit cat. of 1935, Valentiner dated the work 1655-60, but he corrected this in his article.

8. Statement to the compiler, 1967.