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Traveler at Rest

Frans van Mieris
(Leiden 1635 – 1681 Leiden)

ca. 1657
oil on copper
21.6 x 17.8 cm
signed, lower right: “F. van Mieris”
FM-122

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Traveler at Rest, datable to about 1657, is one of Frans van Mieris's earliest masterpieces.[1] Beautifully executed and wonderfully preserved, this painting demonstrates why this Leiden master was famous for his ability to render light effects and the varied textures of materials. Van Mieris has here depicted a young, red-haired man sitting in the shade of ancient ruins partly overgrown with vegetation and gazing straight at the viewer. In his lap lies a rather large hat, and in his left hand he holds a flask with a wicker cover. Judging from the bag lying beside him, his walking stick, sagging stocking and the torn seam at his shoulder, the man has been traveling and has stopped in a cool spot to refresh himself. The landscape beyond the ruin's arched opening is reminiscent of the sun-drenched images of the Dutch Italianates, whose paintings must have served as Van Mieris's source of inspiration, since he never traveled to Italy.[2]

Van Mieris painted a similar composition, but in reverse, on the easel in the interior of his *The Painter in His Studio* of about 1657 in the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden **(fig 1)**. In that scene, a wealthy visitor or connoisseur studies the painting closely under the artist's watchful eye. There, too, the painting on the easel features a man with a walking stick seated in a relaxed manner under the arched vault of an antique ruin **(fig 2)**. He has removed a sock and a shoe to cool off and rest after his travels. In much the same manner, the sagging stocking in the Leiden Collection painting indicates that the traveler is at rest.[3] Van Mieris emphasizes the traveler's bared knee by having the young man rest his arm on it, a pose also seen in a depiction of a smoking man by Simon Kick (1603–52) and in Carel Fabritius's (1622–54) *Sentry* from 1654 (Schwerin, Staatliches Museum).[4] In each of these instances this motif indicates that the man is resting his tired feet.[5]

The clothing of the man depicted in *Traveler at Rest* denotes a certain affluence, and he may very well have been a Dutchman who went to Italy and wanted to have his trip commemorated once he had returned to Leiden. The man's face, which has all the striking features of an actual portrait, closely resembles that of the visitor in Van Mieris's Dresden painting, who seems to have come to the artist's studio to see how he has been represented. The tattered look, the direct gaze, and the Italianate setting in the Leiden Collection painting similarly indicate that the sitter wanted to stress his full engagement in the experience of being abroad.[6] The directness of the portrait resembles that of cloth merchant Anthony de Bordes, who commissioned a portrait by Michael Sweerts (1618–64) in about 1648 **(fig 3)**. De Bordes visited Italy in 1648, and the backdrop of his portrait—an obelisk standing in a park-like landscape with a fountain—places the scene in Rome.[7] Whereas the merchant is helped out of his boots by a servant, suggesting he has just returned from riding in the Roman countryside, the man in Van Mieris's painting has simply been walking.

Comparative Figures



Fig 1. Frans van Mieris the Elder, *The Painter in His Studio*, ca. 1657, oil on panel, 63.9 x 46.8 cm, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, 1751



Fig 2. Detail of Frans van Mieris the Elder, *The Painter in His Studio*, ca. 1657, oil on panel, 63.9 x 46.8 cm, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, 1751



Fig 3. Michael Sweerts, *Anthonij de Bordes and His Valet*, ca. 1648, oil on canvas, 50.7 x 66.6 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., Gift from the Collection of Dr. Arthur and Mrs. Arlene Elkind, Fund given in honor of Derald Ruttenberg's Grandchildren, and New Century Fund, 2012.13.1

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In painting *Traveler at Rest*, Van Mieris used a copper plate, an ultra-smooth support ideally suited to his refined and meticulous technique.[8] Interestingly, the artist, who had spent a short time training as a goldsmith, applied a layer of gold leaf over the copper ground.[9] Rembrandt had done the same around 1629–30 in his *Laughing Soldier*.[10] But while the latter artist allowed the gold to glint through the surface of the paint, Van Mieris covered up the gold with his preparatory layers. He may have wanted to protect the painting from the ravages of time, as gold shields the paint from copper's oxidation. In any event, this expensive technique is another indication that the painting was commissioned by a wealthy individual who wanted his portrait painted as a reminder of his travels to Italy. Without knowing the details of Van Mieris's technique, Gustav Friedrich Waagen (1797–1868), the director of the Berlin museums and the first professor of art history in that city, praised this painting in 1854 as being "of that soft golden tone, and of that delicate feeling, which distinguish his best pictures."[11]

The earliest known owner of *Traveler at Rest* is probably Jacob Hoofman (d. 1799). After his death, the painting must have been inherited by one of his art-loving daughters, either Margaretha Hoofman (1773–1807) or Maria Hoofman (1776–1845), who each inherited half of their father's collection.[12] After Margaretha's death, her part of the paintings collection was inherited by her husband, Pieter Quarles van Ufford (1757–1834), who transferred the ownership of the most important works in this collection to his unmarried sister-in-law, Maria Hoofman, while others were sold anonymously in 1818.[13] In or before 1819 the painting was part of the art collection of shipbuilder William Wells (1768–1847), who lived in Kent.[14] After Wells's death, the painting was acquired by Robert Staynor Holford (1808–92), a member of the British parliament. In 1857 Holford lent the painting to the famous exhibition in Manchester, *Art Treasures of the United Kingdom*.[15] Apart from that exhibition, the painting remained at Holford's London residence, Dorchester House, which his son, Sir George Holford (1860–1926), inherited in 1892. After the latter's death, *Traveler at Rest* became the property of Giovanni Agnelli (1921–2003), head of the Italian automobile company Fiat in Turin. The painting entered a private collection in Germany in 1988, after which it was acquired by the New York collector Eric Martin Wunsch (1924–2013). In January 2014, this exquisite painting entered the Leiden Collection.

- Quentin Buvelot, 2017

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Endnotes

1. Previously, this highly accomplished painting was dated 1656–57 and 1655–57; cf., respectively, Otto Naumann, *Frans van Mieris (1635–1681) the Elder*, 2 vols. (Doornspijk, 1981), 1: 44; and Quentin Buvelot, "The Resting Traveler," in *Frans van Mieris 1635–1681*, ed. Quentin Buvelot (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis; Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art) (Zwolle, 2005), 98.
2. Otto Naumann, *Frans van Mieris (1635–1681) the Elder*, 2 vols. (Doornspijk, 1981), 1:46; and Dieter Beaujean, "Der Besuch im Atelier, um 1655," in *Wettstreit der Künste: Malerei und Skulptur von Dürer bis Daumier*, ed. Ekkehard Mai and Kurt Wettengl (Exh. cat. Munich, Haus der Kunst; Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz Museum) (Wolfratshausen, 2002), 328.
3. A second painting of the same size by Van Mieris, *The Broken Egg*, has been wrongly described as the pendant to *Traveler at Rest*. Otto Naumann, *Frans van Mieris (1635–1681) the Elder*, 2 vols. (Doornspijk, 1981), 1: 45; see also Cornelia Moiso-Diekamp, *Das Pendant in der Holländischen Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main, 1987), 383, no. D 6; and Quentin Buvelot, "The Resting Traveler," in *Frans van Mieris 1635–1681*, ed. Quentin Buvelot (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis; Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art) (Zwolle, 2005), 98–100, no. 10.
4. For Kick's painting, see: sale Zurich, Koller, 20 September 2013, no. 3063; sale Amsterdam, Christie's, 10 November 1992, no. 127. See also Otto Naumann, *Frans van Mieris (1635–1681) the Elder*, 2 vols. (Doornspijk, 1981), 1:45 and fig. 32; 2: 18; Angelika Lasius, *Quiringh van Brekelenkam* (Doornspijk, 1992), 166–67, no. D 25. For Fabritius's painting, see Gero Seelig in Frederick J. Duparc, *Carel Fabritius 1622–1654* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis; Schwerin, Staatliches Museum) (Zwolle, 2005), no. 12.
5. Otto Naumann, *Frans van Mieris (1635–1681) the Elder*, 2 vols. (Doornspijk, 1981), 2:18–19, however, proposed an interpretation that involved an emblematic reading of this motif that suggested that the traveler had not carefully considered his actions; followed in Quentin Buvelot, "The Resting Traveler," in *Frans van Mieris 1635–1681*, ed. Quentin Buvelot (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis; Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art) (Zwolle, 2005), 98–100, no. 10.
6. I would like to thank Otto Naumann and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. for their generous and important input with regard to the interpretation of *Traveler at Rest*, as expressed in personal correspondence of February 2014.
7. Rolf Kultzen, *Michael Sweerts: Brussels 1618–Goa 1664* (Doornspijk, 1996), no. 32; Guido Jansen and Peter C. Sutton, *Michael Sweerts (1618–1664)* (Exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum) (Zwolle, 2001), 77–79, no. 4, repr. Interestingly, the pose of Van Mieris's protagonist is similar to that of a resting traveler in a painting that Sweerts produced in Rome in about 1650. See Otto Naumann, *Frans van Mieris (1635–1681) the Elder*, 2 vols. (Doornspijk, 1981), 1:46 and fig. 39; Rolf Kultzen, *Michael Brussels 1618–Goa 1664*

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(Doornspijk, 1996), no. 8.

8. Only in 1988, when the painting was restored after its acquisition by Otto Naumann, was it discovered that the work is painted on a copper plate. Until then it had always been assumed that the painting was on panel, beginning with John Smith, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish and French Painters*, 9 vols. (London, 1829–42), 1:81, no. 79.

9. Isabel Horovitz, "The Materials and Techniques of European Paintings on Copper Supports," in Michael Komanecky et al., *Copper as Canvas: Two Centuries of Masterpiece Paintings on Copper, 1575–1775* (Exh. cat. Phoenix Art Museum; Kansas City, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art; The Hague, Mauritshuis) (New York, 1998), 88 n. 41.

10. Copper, 15.3 x 12.2 cm (with auxiliary support: 21.5 x 18.2 cm), The Hague, Mauritshuis, inv. 598; see Ben Broos and Ariane van Suchtelen in *Portraits in the Mauritshuis, 1430–1790*, ed. Quentin Buvelot (The Hague and Zwolle, 2004), no. 46, repr.

11. Gustav Friedrich Waagen, *Treasures of Art in Great Britain: Being an Account of the Chief Collections of Paintings, Drawings, Sculptures, Illuminated Mss., etc.,* trans. Elizabeth Eastlake, 3 vols. (London, 1854–57), 2: 200.

12. According to *Catalogue of the Art Treasures of the United Kingdom: Collected at Manchester in 1857* (Exh. cat. Manchester, City Art Gallery) (London, 1857), 74, no. 1078; William Bürger [Etienne-Joseph-Théophile Thoré] *Trésors d'art en Angleterre* (Brussels, 1860, rev. ed., Paris, 1865), 279; and Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century Based on the Work of John Smith*, ed. and trans. Edward G. Hawke, 8 vols. (London, 1907–28), originally published as *Beschreibendes und kritisches Verzeichnis der Werke der hervorragendsten holländischen Maler des XVII. Jahrhunderts*, 10 vols. (Esslingen and Paris, 1907–28), 10: 28, no. 101, the painting came from the Hoofman Collection. For this collection, see Adriaan van der Willigen, *Catalogus der schilderijen van Mejuffrouw Hoofman*, unpublished manuscript, kept at the RKD (Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie/Netherlands Institute for Art History); see also Roeland van Eijnden and Adriaan van der Willigen, *Geschiedenis der vaderlandsche schilderkunst, sedert de helft der XVIIIe eeuw*, 4 vols. (Haarlem, 1816–40), 3: 396, 423, 482; 4: 309.

13. *Catalogus eener uitmuntende verzameling van zeer schoone en kostbare schilderijen [J. Hoofman and P. Quarles van Ufford]*, Amsterdam, 20 October 1818, passim; see also Ruud Priem, "The 'Most Excellent Collection' of Lucretia Johanna van Winter: The Years 1809–22," *Simiolus* 25 (1997): 103–225, 183–84, nos. 2–3.

14. See Dianne Sachko Macleod, "Wells, William," Oxford Dictionary.

15. See *Catalogue of the Art Treasures of the United Kingdom: Collected at Manchester in 1857* (Exh. cat. Manchester, City Art Gallery) (London, 1857), 74, no. 1078. See also Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion and Collecting in England and France* (Oxford, 1980), 157–80.

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Provenance

- Maria Hoofman (1776–1845), Haarlem, possibly inherited from her father Jacob Hoofman (1739–99).
- William Wells (1768–1847), Redleaf, Kent, by 1819 (his sale, Christie's, London, 13 May 1848, no. 85 [to Fuller for 493 guineas]).
- Sir Robert Stayner Holford (1808–92), Dorchester House, London, and Westonbirt, Gloucestershire, 1848; by descent to his son, Sir George Lindsay Holford (1860–1926) (his sale, Christie's, London, 17 May 1928, no. 21 [to Julius Böhler for 504 guineas]).[1]
- [Julius Böhler, Munich.]
- Giovanni Agnelli (1921–2003), Turin [through Otto Naumann Ltd., New York, to Diethelm Doll].
- Diethelm Doll, Bonn, 1988 [through David Koetser Gallery, Zurich, to Martin Wunsch].
- Eric Martin Wunsch (1924–2013), New York (sale, Christie's, New York, 29 January 2014, no. 5).
- From whom acquired by the present owner in 2014.

Provenance Notes

1. Rembrandt van Rijn and Workshop's *Man with a Sword*, now in The Leiden Collection, was also formerly in the collection of Sir Robert Stayner Holford and Sir George Lindsay Holford, and was sold in the latter's sale in 1928.

Exhibition History

- London, British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom, "Exhibition of Pictures of the Italian, Spanish, Flemish, and Dutch Schools," 1819, no. 34 [lent by William Wells].
- Manchester, City Art Gallery, "Exhibition of the Art Treasures of the United Kingdom," 1857, no. 1078 [lent by Sir Robert Stayner Holford].
- London, Royal Academy of Arts, "Winter Exhibition: Exhibition of Works by the Old Masters, and by Deceased Masters of the British School," January–March 1894, no. 49 [lent by Sir George Lindsay Holford].
- Leiden, Lakenhal Museum, "Fêtes de Rembrandt à Leyde," 15 July–15 September 1906, no. 27 [lent by Sir George Lindsay Holford].
- London, Burlington Fine Arts Club, "Winter Exhibition: Pictures and Other Objects of Art Selected from the Collections of Mr. Robert Holford (1808–1892)," 1921–1922, no. 35 [lent by Sir George Lindsay Holford].
- The Hague, The Mauritshuis, "Frans van Mieris 1635–1681: Painted Perfection," 1 October 2005–22 January 2006, no. 10 [lent by Eric Martin Wunsch].

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- Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, “Amourous Intrgiues and Painterly Refinement: The Art of Frans van Mieris,” 26 February–21 May 2006, no. 10 [lent by Eric Martin Wunsch].
- Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, on loan with the permanent collection, August 2014– June 2016 [lent by the present owner].
- Paris, Museé du Louvre, “Masterpieces of The Leiden Collection: The Age of Rembrandt,” 22 February–22 May 2017, no. 13 [lent by the present owner].
- Beijing, National Museum of China, “Rembrandt and His Time: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 17 June–3 September 2017, no. 41 [lent by the present owner].
- Shanghai, Long Museum, West Bund, “Rembrandt, Vermeer and Hals in the Dutch Golden Age: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 23 September 2017–25 February 2018, no. 41 [lent by the present owner].
- Moscow, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, “The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer: Masterpieces of The Leiden Collection,” 28 March–22 July 2018, no. 34 [lent by the present owner].
- St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum, “The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer: Masterpieces of The Leiden Collection,” 5 September 2018–13 January 2019, no. 34 [lent by the present owner].
- Abu Dhabi, Louvre Abu Dhabi, “Rembrandt, Vermeer and the Dutch Golden Age. Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection and the Musée du Louvre,” 14 February–18 May 2019, no. 61 [lent by the present owner].
- Amsterdam, H’ART Museum, “From Rembrandt to Vermeer: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 9 April–24 August 2025 [lent by the present owner].
- West Palm Beach, Norton Museum of Art, “Art and Life in Rembrandt’s Time: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 25 October 2025–29 March 2026 [lent by the present owner].

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Museum of Art. Zwolle, 2025. [Exhibition catalogue also published in Dutch.]

- Wheelock, Arthur K., Jr. “Art and Life in Rembrandt’s Time.” In *Art and Life in Rembrandt’s Time*. Edited by Elizabeth Nogrady et al., 20, fig. 6; 21. Exh. cat. Amsterdam, H’ART Museum; West Palm Beach, Norton Museum of Art. Zwolle, 2025. [Exhibition catalogue also published in Dutch.]

Versions

Versions

1. Possibly Ary de Vois (1632/35–1680), after Frans van Mieris the Elder, *A Traveler at Rest*, oil on panel, 21.5 x 17.5 cm, previous sale, G. Tournier, Palais d’Orsay, Paris, 8 December 1977, no. 11.
2. Possibly Jan Miel (1599–1663), after Frans van Mieris the Elder, *A Resting Traveler*, 17th century, oil on copper, 20 x 21 cm, Museu Nacional de Arte Antigua, Lisbon, inv. no. 527 Pint.

Technical Summary

The painting was examined in normal and ultraviolet light, without the benefit of X-radiographs, infrared reflectography or microscopy.

The support is a thin metal plate, estimated to be copper possibly with a coating of gold.[1] It has been adhered to a wooden panel with a vertical grain and thin wooden strips have been added to all four edges, creating a collar. A cradle has been attached to the back of the panel.

The ground is either extremely thin or non-existent. The paint was applied wet-into-wet with the lights and darkest darks painted on top of the mid-tones. The artist layered fine, delicate strokes on top of one another, dragging paint from the lower layer to blend the colors. He used broader strokes in the background and very fine strokes in the figure. The foliage was painted in thin glazes. A 1.0cm high dark brown strip, which may be a later addition, was painted along the bottom edge.

The copper is in plane, though there are slight indentations in the upper right quadrant and in the sitter’s proper left thigh. A wavy, indented line is visible along the bottom but this may be in the paint or varnish.There is an extremely find craquelure pattern throughout the paint, which is more visible in the darks. Tiny paint losses mark the intersections of the cracks in the background. There are losses in the sitter’s proper left sleeve, proper right chest and shoulder, and in the sky in the arch.

The support is a thin metal plate that is estimated to be copper. A small area of the plate is exposed in the bottom right corner, revealing a copper color. It may be coated with gold. It has been adhered, presumably with glue, to a wooden panel with a vertical grain. Wooden strips have been added to all four edges, creating a collar, so that the edges and back of the plate are completely obscured. A cradle with three vertical

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members and three horizontal member was attached to the back of the panel. The cradle extends onto the wooden strips.

Either a very thin ground or no ground is present. In cracks and areas of loss the copper plate is exposed and no ground is visible. However, the painting has a slightly lumpy, grainy texture. It is unclear if this is indicative of a ground or if the texture is in the plate and/or the paint.

The paint is estimated to be oil, though no analysis has been done. It was painted wet-into-wet with the lights and darkest darks painted on top of the mid-tones. The artist layered fine, delicate strokes on top of one another, dragging paint from the lower layer to blend the colors. He used broader strokes in the background and very fine strokes in the figure. The foliage was painted in thin glazes. A dark brown strip, approximately 1.0 cm high, was painted along the bottom edge. It is unclear if this was a later addition.

The painting is coated with a natural resin varnish.

The copper plate is stable and remains in mostly in plane. There is a slight indentation in the upper right quadrant. The indentation measures approximately 2cm by 4 cm. Another small indentation is found in the sitter's proper left thigh. A wavy, indented line is visible along the bottom but it is unclear if this indentation is in the paint, the varnish or the copper plate.

An extremely fine craquelure pattern extends throughout the paint, though it is more visible in the darks. A fair number of tiny paint losses mark the intersections of the cracks in the background, especially in the upper left quadrant, and in the sitter's dark sleeves. There is a cluster of small losses in the sitter's proper left sleeve near his elbow. Additional losses are found in the sitter's proper right chest and shoulder, above his hat. A larger loss is located in the sky in the arch.

The varnish is slightly thick, but it remains clear and even.

Technical Summary Endnotes

1. Isabel Horovitz, "The Materials and Techniques of European Paintings on Copper Supports," in Michael K. Komanecky et al., *Copper as Canvas: Two Centuries of Masterpiece Paintings on Copper, 1575-1775* (Exh. cat. Phoenix Art Museum; The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City; Royal Cabinet of Paintings Mauritshuis, The Hague) (New York, 1999), 88 n. 41. Horovitz states that Charlotte Hale of the Metropolitan Museum of Art communicated that the support had a layer of gold leaf over the copper.

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