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Portrait of a Man with a Hat

Govaert Flinck
(Kleve 1615 – 1660 Amsterdam)

1641
oil on panel
91.3 x 74.5 cm
signed and dated in brown paint, lower right corner: “G.flinck.ft 1641”
GF-100

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In this distinguished half-length portrait, Govaert Flinck has depicted a well-dressed, elegant gentleman clasping a broad-brimmed black hat before his chest.[1] Exuding an unassuming confidence, he stands turned to the right in a three-quarter pose as he directs a steady gaze toward the viewer. His sober, black costume is accented by a wide, white lace collar and sleeve cuffs that gently fold at his wrists. He has shoulder-length brown hair, a goatee and a thick moustache that curves slightly upward. Wrinkles beneath his eyes and a thinning hairline reveal the sitter's middle age, while his plump face and rotund body suggest a comfortably lived life. By rendering the figure with flushed cheeks and slightly parted lips, Flinck achieved a sense of immediacy in this otherwise reserved and formal portrait.

Flinck turned to Rembrandt van Rijn's (1606–69) *Portrait of a Man Holding His Hat* **(fig 1)** from ca. 1639 as the compositional model for the Leiden Collection painting. He followed the same half-length format and similarly posed his sitter looking at the viewer while holding his hat with both hands.[2] Although Flinck's sitter is more modestly dressed than Rembrandt's wealthy—and likely foreign—gentleman, he also wears a lace-trimmed white linen collar and cuffs, which Flinck suggestively rendered with controlled yet loose brushwork.[3] Flinck similarly situated his sitter against a bare plaster wall which, as in Rembrandt's painting, has a faint crack helping to define its position in space.[4] Subtle differences, however, exist between Rembrandt's and Flinck's portraits. Rembrandt's gentleman has a slight forward thrust to his body which, combined with the shimmering fabric of his jacket and the pronounced chiaroscuro effects the master used to model his form, creates a subtle sense of movement to the image. Flinck's gentleman stands quite comfortably where he is, seemingly in no hurry to change his position or to don the wide-brimmed black hat that he holds so firmly in his hands.[5]

This portrait type was popular in Amsterdam in the middle decades of the seventeenth century. Flinck repeated this compositional model in his *Portrait of a Man* from 1645 in Bonn, but situated the figure beneath a classicizing arch and an open, blue sky, revealed by a curtain which has been pulled aside.[6] Gerard ter Borch (1617–81) also adapted this figure's pose in his *Portrait of a Gentleman* **(fig 2)** from ca. 1652–53. In this work, Ter Borch similarly depicted a sober, sensitively rendered image of a wealthy Amsterdam burgher turned to the right and carrying a large black hat.[7] Although none of the identities of these sitters is known, one can deduce from their distinguished air that they all belonged to the upper echelon of Amsterdam society.

Comparative Figures



Fig 1. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of a Man Holding His Hat*, ca. 1639, oil on panel, 81.4 x 71.4 cm, Armand Hammer Collection, UCLA, at the Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, Los Angeles



Fig 2. Gerard ter Borch, *Portrait of a Gentleman*, ca. 1652–53, oil on panel, 28 x 23 cm, private collection

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- Lara Yeager-Crasselt, 2017

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Endnotes

1. See J. W. von Moltke, *Govaert Flinck (1615–1660)* (Amsterdam, 1965), 131, no. 108; Josua Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 3, *1635–1642*, Stichting Foundation, Rembrandt Research Project (The Hague, 1989), 310.
2. For Rembrandt's portrait and its relationship to GF-100, see Albert Blankert, ed., *Rembrandt: A Genius and His Impact* (Exh. cat. Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria; Canberra, National Gallery of Australia) (Zwolle, 1997), 124–26, no. 12; Josua Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 3: *1635–1642*, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (The Hague, 1989), 305–11, A130, particularly 310–11. Based on the compositional similarities between the two works, the authors of the *Corpus* suggested that the Rembrandt panel had been reduced at the right and bottom (prior to a 1771 sale that describes its present dimensions), during which time the original signature was lost. The present signature on the Rembrandt painting is believed to have been added later. Flinck's signature is indistinctly observable in the lower right of GF-100.
3. Rembrandt's portrait may represent a foreign aristocrat, a supposition that results from the sitter's unusual dress, which was not reflective of contemporary Amsterdam fashion. He is dressed in a gray taffeta costume "with a pinkish-purple lustre" and golden-yellow braiding along its seams. For Rembrandt's sitter's costume, see Josua Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 3: *1635–1642*, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (The Hague: 1989), 305, 308–9.
4. Josua Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 3, *1635–1642*, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (The Hague, 1989), 310; Albert Blankert, ed., *Rembrandt: A Genius and His Impact* (Exh. cat. Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria; Canberra, National Gallery of Australia) (Zwolle, 1997), 126.
5. The work of the Haarlem artist Johannes Cornelisz Verspronck (1600–62) also served as a precedent to this portrait type. The standing, turned pose, foreshortened elbow, and occasional hat motif were common compositional elements in Verspronck's oeuvre, including the 1641 *Portrait of a Man* (Rijksmuseum Twenthe, Enschede) and the *Portrait of Eduard Wallis*, from 1652 (oil on panel, 97 x 75 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). In the latter image, Verspronck shows the sitter seated, though still holding a hat. See R. E. O. Ekkart, *Johannes Cornelisz. Verspronck* (Haarlem, 1979).
6. *Portrait of a Man*, oil on canvas, 102 x 82 cm, Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn. See Joachim Wolfgang von Moltke, *Govaert Flinck (1615–1660)* (Amsterdam, 1965), 131, no. 310; Werner Sumowksi, *Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schüler*, 6 vols. (Landau and Pfalz, 1983–94), 2:1038, 1132, no. 700.
7. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. first noted the close similarities between Ter Borch's and Flinck's portrait types, situating both images within an Amsterdam portrait tradition. Ter Borch, however, depicted his sitter with a smaller collar with tassels, which was consistent with contemporary fashion. See Arthur K.

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Wheelock Jr., ed., *Gerard ter Borch* (Exh. cat. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art; Detroit, The Detroit Institute of Arts; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (Zwolle, 2004), 100.

Provenance

- Vavasour Earle, London (his sale, Christie's, London, 31 May 1906, no. 19 [to Hughes]).
- L. Biruschansky, Paris, by 1936.
- [Samuel Nystad Oude Kunst B. V., The Hague, by 1968/69] (sale, Christie's, London, 11 June 1971, no. 109 [to the J. Paul Getty Museum].
- J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, until 2007 (sale, Sotheby's Amsterdam, 8 May 2007, no. 67 [Johnny van Haeften, Ltd., London]).
- From whom acquired by the present owner in 2007.

Exhibition History

- Delft, Stedelijk Museum het Prinsenhof, "20e Oude kunst-en antiekbeurs der Vereeniging van Handelaren in Oude Kunst in Nederland: 1948–1968," 20 June–10 July 1968.
- Montreal, Museum of Fine Arts, "Rembrandt and His Pupils: A Loan Exhibition," 9 January–23 February 1969; Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, 14 March–27 April 1969, 90, no. 62 [lent by Samuel Nystad Oude Kunst B.V.].
- Kleve, Museum Kurhaus Kleve, "Govert Flinck: Reflecting History," 4 October 2015–17 January 2016, no. 9 [lent by the present owner].

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- Fredericksen, Burton B. *Catalogue of the Paintings in the J. Paul Getty Museum*. Malibu, 1972, no. 104.
- Sumowski, Werner. *Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schüler*, 6 vols. Landau and Pfalz, 1983–94, 2:1038, 1129,

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no. 697.

- Sutton, Peter C. *A Guide to Dutch Art in America*. Grand Rapids, 1986, 146.
- Gaskell, Ivan. *The Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection: Seventeenth-Century Dutch and Flemish Painting*. London: 1990, 131-32, under no. 24, fig. 1.
- Jaffé, David. *Summary Catalogue of European Paintings in the J. Paul Getty Museum*. Los Angeles, 1997, 43.
- Blankert, Albert, ed., *Rembrandt: A Genius and His Impact*. Exh. cat., Melbourne National Gallery of Victoria; Canberra, National Gallery of Australia. Zwolle, 1997–98, 124, fig. 12b.
- Bruyn, Josua, et al. *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings.* Vol. 3: *1635–1642*. Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project. The Hague, 1989. 3: 310–11, fig. 5.
- Wheelock, Arthur K., Jr., ed. *Gerard ter Borch*. Exh. cat. Washington, National Gallery of Art; Detroit, Detroit Institute of Arts. New Haven, 2004. 100, fig. 1.
- Guerrero, Maria del Mar Borobia, ed. *Catalogue Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza. Pintura Antigua*. Madrid, 2009, 133.
- Van der Molen, Tom, and Valentina Vlasic. *Govert Flinck – Reflecting History*. Exh. cat. Kleve, Museum Kurhaus Kleve. Kleve, 2015, 98, 131, no. 9.

Technical Summary

The support, a single plank of fairly thick, vertically grained and vertically oriented rectangular-shaped hardwood, has no bevels.[1] The panel is unthinned and uncradled, and has a light-colored priming layer along the reverse. There are four import stamps and two stencils along the reverse but no wax collection seals or panel maker's marks.

A light-colored ground has been thinly and evenly applied. The paint has been applied thinly and smoothly along the upper third of the background, allowing the ground to show through and more opaquely along the lower two-thirds of the composition, obscuring the ground. A brown underlayer along the figure's hair remains visible through the loosely painted curls.

No underdrawing is readily apparent in infrared images captured at 780–1000 nanometers, but a few slight compositional changes are visible. The right side of the brim of the figure's hat has been shifted to the left, as has the lower portion the hat. There is no X-radiograph of the painting.

The painting is signed and dated in brown paint along the lower right corner.

The painting has not undergone conservation treatment since its acquisition in 2007 and remains in a good state of preservation.

Technical Summary Endnotes

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1. The characterization of the wood as a “hardwood with vessels” is based on analysis carried out at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

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