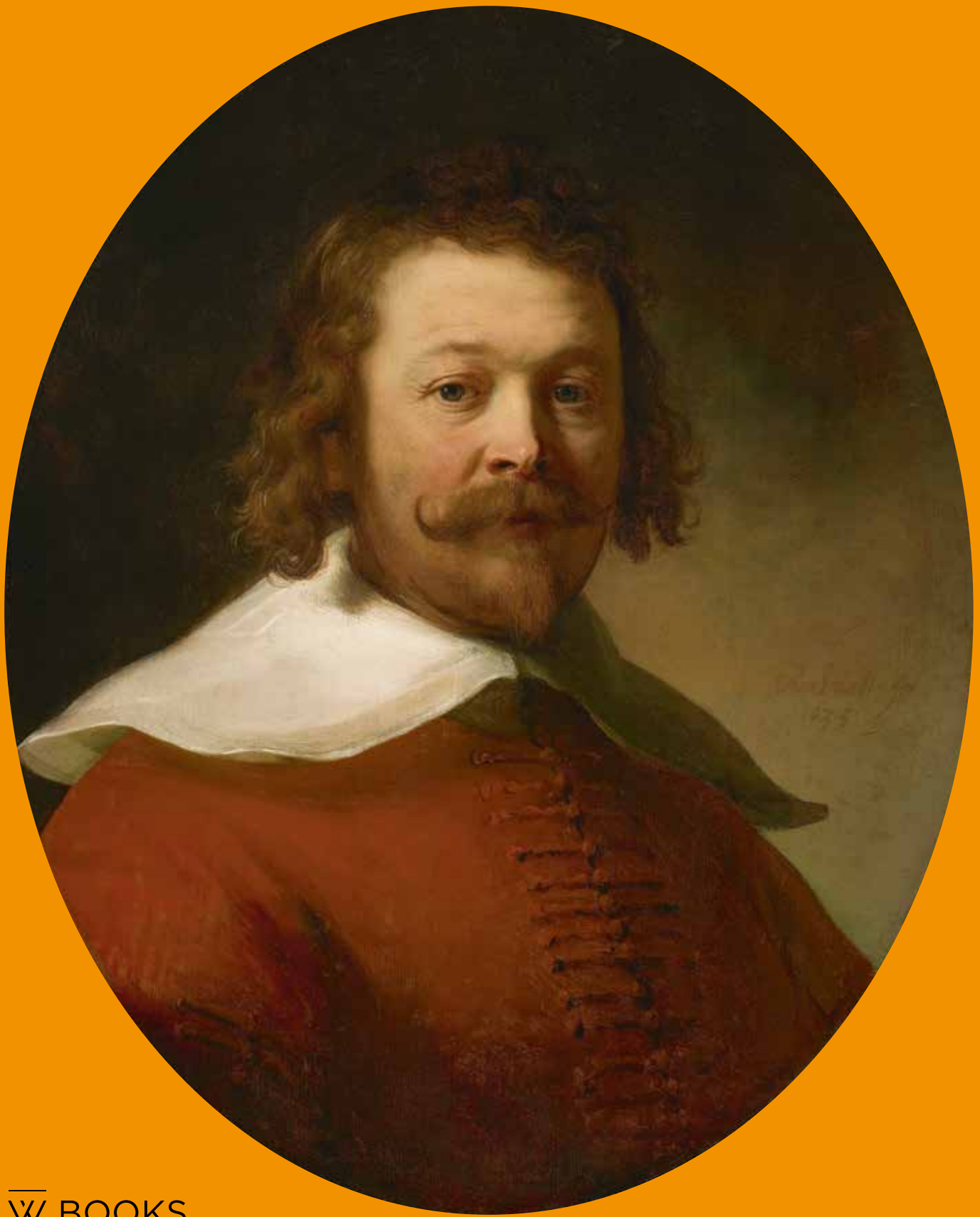
ART AND LIFE IN REMBRANDT'S TIME



W BOOKS

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Foreword

These days, it is well known that Repin and Van Gogh sat on a bench, gazing in silent adoration at *The Night Watch* in Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum. We can picture the scene. Rembrandt is a great and famous artist. However, the reputation and fame of our 17th-century painters extends far beyond the Netherlands. In every major museum in the world, from London to Paris and New York, they attract many visitors. Few would be surprised to hear that such museum visits inspired young artists like Repin and Van Gogh. Yet the fact that they also cast a spell on a bright schoolboy from New York, and spurred him to start collecting, is perhaps less well known.

That boy was Thomas Kaplan, the year 1968. He was six years old; not yet a teenager. His mother took him to the Metropolitan Museum of Art on Fifth Avenue, 'And that's where the magic happened'. He was unable to take his eyes off the Rembrandt. It would be interesting to find out which Rembrandt was his favourite. Perhaps the famous self-portrait with the circles on the wall, or the mythical Aristotle with the bust of Homer? As we now know, the spell that was cast did not break. The enthusiast gradually became a collector. A successful career in business enabled him to purchase many works. Initially by painters in Rembrandt's circle, including those from Leiden; the painting tradition where Rembrandt began his career. Works by Gerard Dou, for example, of which the Leiden Collection has more than fifteen. Today he can call himself the world's leading collector of Dutch old masters, with a record number of Rembrandts in his collection. What is more, he even has the world's only Vermeer in private hands; or semi-private, one should say. Not because its ownership is in question, but because Thomas Kaplan and Daphne Recanati manage their extensive collection (more than 200 works, including nearly twenty Rembrandts) as though it were public property.

How this takes place is evident from the website, theleidencollection.com. For every work, the reader will find a wealth of information that few museums can match, either in richness or expertise. Each work is accompanied by its provenance and attribution (little is more important when it comes to acquiring old masters), but also by outstanding visual material and eloquent art-historical essays. Everything is presented with great transparency. Research is generously shared. It feels like being granted a peek into the global art world; a world that usually operates behind closed doors, where information is crucial. For example, a letter written in 1963 accompanies the 'Woman seated at a virginal' (1670/1675) by Johannes Vermeer. This is an extremely important letter, because it contains the authentication of this particular Vermeer by the then director of Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Arthur van Schendel, and the renowned art expert Frits Lugt. In 2023, the work was therefore proudly part of the major retrospective at the Rijksmuseum, and it is now back in the Netherlands again, this time in an appropriate 17th-century frame. This generosity is typical of the couple and their unsurpassed Leiden Collection.

The collection will undoubtedly come to be counted among their life's work. In interviews, Thomas Kaplan often speaks of a 'lending library'. It is a nice phrase, expressing their fundamental desire to ensure that the works reach as large an audience as possible, all around the world. These old masters are seasoned travellers. They have been exhibited in Paris, Moscow, St. Petersburg, New York, Delft, Dubai and, of course, Leiden. This year, as Amsterdam celebrates its 750th anniversary, H'ART

Museum is their temporary home. It was his love for Dutch old masters that brought the young Thomas Kaplan to our city, and that, too, is an enduring bond. The exhibition ‘From Rembrandt to Vermeer’ is his homage to the Amsterdam that captured his heart. It is an exceptionally large selection from a collection unlike any other. Previous displays involved smaller selections from the extensive Leiden Collection; even the exhibition that we were privileged to present in 2023 suddenly looks modest in comparison to what is now coming to Amsterdam. Thomas Kaplan called it a prelude for good reason. ‘From Rembrandt to Vermeer, Masterpieces from the Leiden Collection’ surpasses all previous exhibitions. On the River Amstel, in the centre of the city where so many of the painters visited each other’s studios, we are witnessing a ‘homecoming’ of unprecedented quality. Dankjewel, thank you so much, dear Thomas, dear Daphne, and the ever-professional staff of your unmatchable and beautiful collection.

Annabelle Birnie
General Director H’ART Museum

Foreword

It was a partnership that began with the loan of a singular, restrained painting.

The long-term loan of Jacobus Vrel's painting, *Interior with a Sick Woman by a Fireplace* gave way to a new partnership between The Leiden Collection and the Norton Museum of Art. Hundreds of thousands viewed Vrel's window into the world of 17th-century Dutch life.

For that, we can thank Thomas Kaplan, who is one of the world's leading collectors of 17th-century Dutch paintings. He and his wife, Daphne Recanati Kaplan, manage their collection as a public entity, lending works to other institutions like the Norton in the hopes that they may inspire viewers young and old.

These unmatched paintings have been widely exhibited in museums in Paris, Beijing, Shanghai, Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Abu Dhabi, as well as in Leiden and Amsterdam, where this current exhibition at the H'ART Museum has just commemorated Amsterdam's 750th anniversary. The Norton Museum of Art is honored that *Art and Life in Rembrandt's Time* has now come to South Florida. This exhibition aligns with an important historical milestone in this country—the 400th anniversary of the Dutch establishment of New Amsterdam in New York City's present-day Manhattan. Taken together, these anniversaries serve as a powerful moment of reflection. For American audiences, the exhibition provides an opportunity to revisit our country's origins as we examine masterful paintings from the most celebrated artists of the 17th century and the day-to-day lives of the Dutch people who crossed the Atlantic.

On view from October 25, 2025, through March 29, 2026, the exhibition marks the first large-scale show of Rembrandt van Rijn's paintings in the United States in over a decade. It is the first time an exhibition of such scale and quality has been presented in Florida.

It is a fitting sojourn for the artworks in an institution that is celebrating its 85th year of stimulating creativity and educating audiences. Bringing world-renowned art to South Florida is our mission and duty.

Our museum's founder, Ralph Norton, had a vision like Thomas Kaplan's in that he, too, wanted to share art with an audience who might not otherwise have access to fine art. He was driven to create diverse holdings that included both the modern artworks of the Impressionists and American Realists, but also artworks from an earlier chapter of humanity—such as ancient jades from China and Dutch genre scene paintings from the 17th century and beyond. In fact, one of Norton's earliest acquisitions was *Dutch Interior* by the contemporary Dutch artist Bernard Pothast (1882–1966), which Norton purchased just two years after he bought his first painting in 1923.

Norton's institution, the first art museum in South Florida, now boasts one of the finest permanent collections in the United States, creating an inspiring legacy that has endured more than 70 years after Norton's death.

We continue that heritage by partnering with The Leiden Collection to bring *Art and Life in Rembrandt's Time* from the banks of Amsterdam's canals to those of South Florida.

Finally, I express my deepest gratitude to Daisy Soros, whose introduction to Thomas Kaplan set this exhibition in motion.

Presenting this exhibition is a privilege for which we are grateful.

We are confident visitors to *Art and Life in Rembrandt's Time* will be grateful, too.

Ghislain d'Humières
Kenneth C. Griffin Director and CEO
Norton Museum of Art

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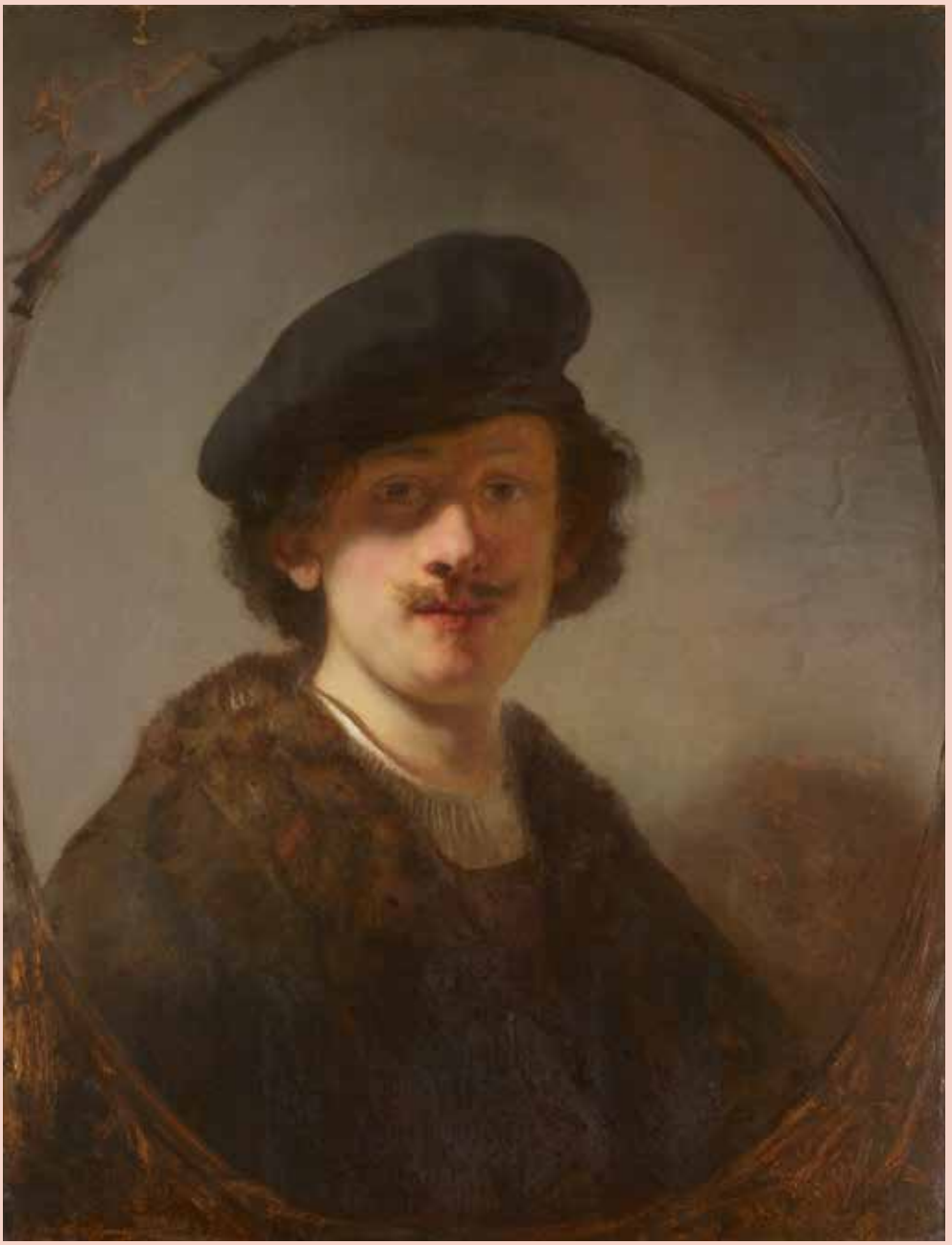
Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.

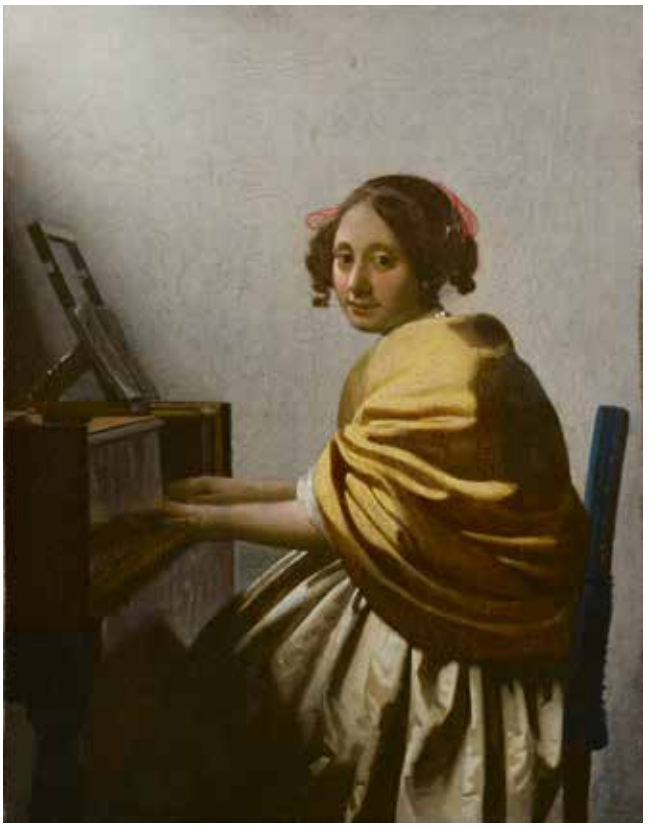


1. Rembrandt van Rijn, ***Self-Portrait with Shaded Eyes,*** **1634.**

Art and Life in Rembrandt's Time

This catalogue *Art and Life in Rembrandt's Time*, accompanies the exhibition at the H'ART Museum of seventy-five Dutch seventeenth-century paintings from The Leiden Collection commemorating the 750th anniversary of Amsterdam. Although Rembrandt's paintings are at the exhibition's core, it is not a monographic show. The exhibition includes exceptional works (see Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait with Shaded Eyes*, fig. 1) by Dutch artists from multiple urban centers, among them, of course, Amsterdam and Rembrandt's native Leiden, but also Utrecht, Haarlem, Deventer, The Hague, and Delft. Importantly, the paintings are arranged thematically and not by artist. The exhibition's themes evoke important aspects of the daily life in Amsterdam and, more broadly, in the Netherlands.

This exhibition draws from The Leiden Collection's great strength, which is the depiction of humanity in all its facets, from portraits and genre scenes to biblical and mythological subjects. One continually senses the indominable spirit of the Dutch people as one walks through the show, not only when marveling at Rembrandt's formal portraits of wealthy burgers, but also when viewing his expressive *tronies* (character studies) of men and women from a range of social classes. Other paintings by artists such as Gerard Dou, Gabriel Metsu, and Frans van Mieris from Leiden, and Gerard ter Borch from Deventer, feature activities that engaged the Dutch in their everyday lives, both within and without the home. Some paintings depict the marketing and preparing of



2. Johannes Vermeer, *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*, ca. 1670–75.

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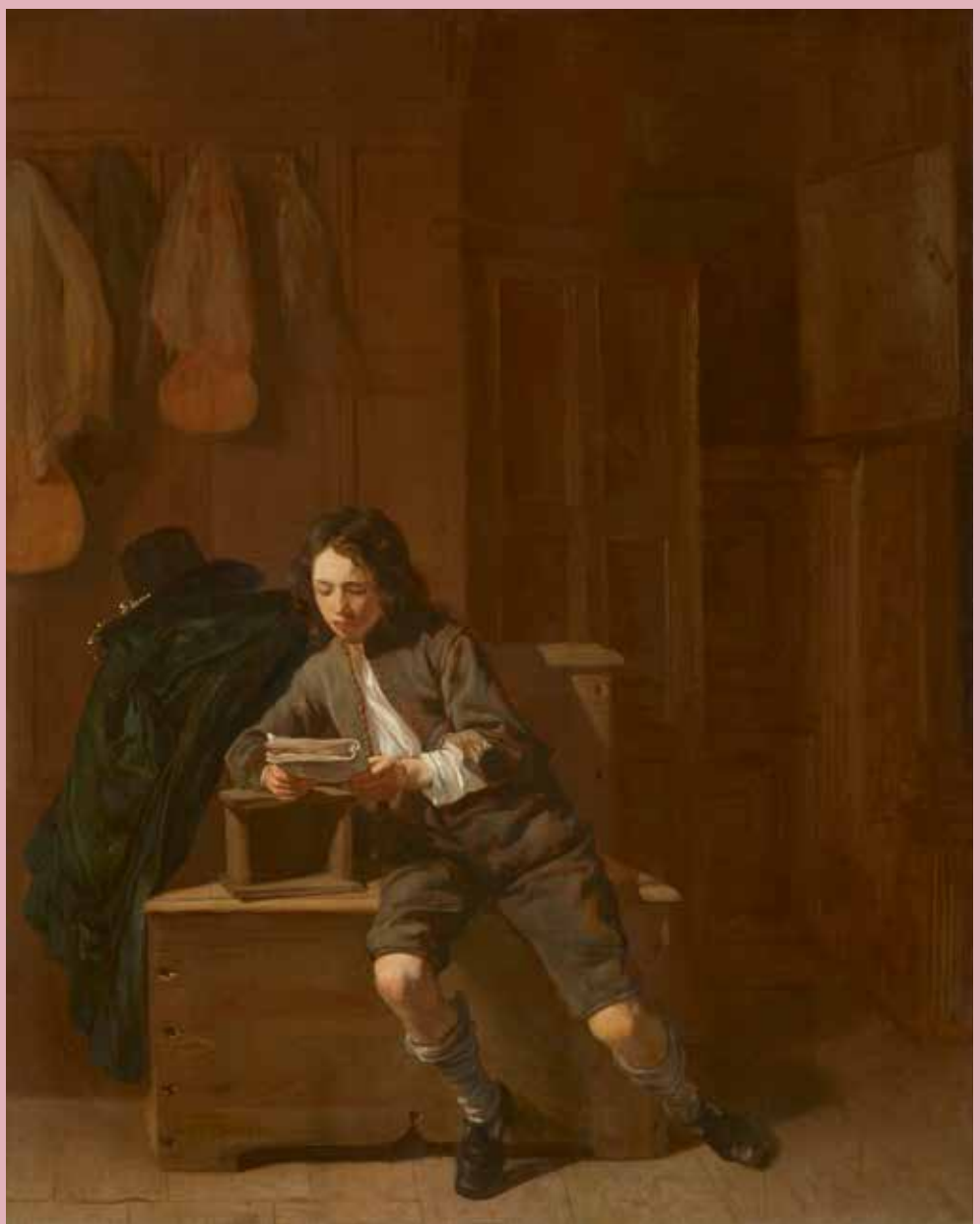
Han Bakker



1. Jacob van Loo, *Young Man Reading,* **ca. 1650.**

Amsterdam, Cultural Haven of the World

Whilst the Republic of the Seven United Provinces was still in its infancy in the early 17th century, its Protestant nature had already made a clear mark on cultural life. Children—both boys and girls—attended school, even if only to learn to read the Bible. Imposing Protestant churches sprang up all over Amsterdam, with the Westerkerk (completed in 1631) the indisputable highlight of the canal ring, partly still under construction at that time. The city found itself in the midst of a boom that would lead it to play a unique role in European history. The stagnant smell of canal water was increasingly replaced with that of fresh printing ink: Amsterdam quickly emerged as what would later become known as the 'bookstore of the world'.

Trading centre of the Republic

Paradoxically enough, the roots of Amsterdam's cultural flowering lay in conflict and persecution elsewhere. As the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648) raged and the Spanish Inquisition tightened its grip in the Southern Netherlands, many booksellers from Antwerp sought refuge in northern cities such as Amsterdam, Haarlem, Middelburg and Leiden. This influx of science and craftsmanship, combined with Amsterdam's growing role as the trade centre of the Republic, laid the foundations for an unprecedented explosion of culture in the city.

The relative religious tolerance that characterised Amsterdam was inspired by the ideas of the free-thinking philosopher Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert (1522-1590), born on Warmoesstraat in Amsterdam. His insights offered fertile ground for ideas that would have been labelled as heretical elsewhere in Europe. Coornhert believed that everyone was equal, regardless of whether they were a Christian, Jew or Muslim; a remarkably progressive view for the time.

This openness on the part of Amsterdam's government did the city little harm. It not only drew Flemish printers, but also traders, freethinkers and numerous religious groups from all over Europe, such as the persecuted Sephardim; Jews from Spain and Portugal, with their global trade contacts, rich intellectual traditions, and knowledge of Arabic philosophy from Al-Andalus.

Each wave of migration brought its own expertise, networks and perspectives, adding to the cultural diversity of the city. The effects were far-reaching. On Bloemgracht canal, Willem Jansz. Blaeu, a cartographer from Antwerp who settled in Amsterdam in 1599, produced maps and atlases of unparalleled precision and beauty. His eleven-volume 'Atlas Maior' (1662), a 'large atlas or description of the world, showing and describing the earth, the sea and the sky', featuring almost 600 maps, numerous illustrations and thousands of pages of descriptions of overseas territories, was the most expensive book in the Republic, and of inestimable value to the Dutch East and West India Companies in their drive to conquer the world. Artist Cornelis de Man referenced Blaeu's work

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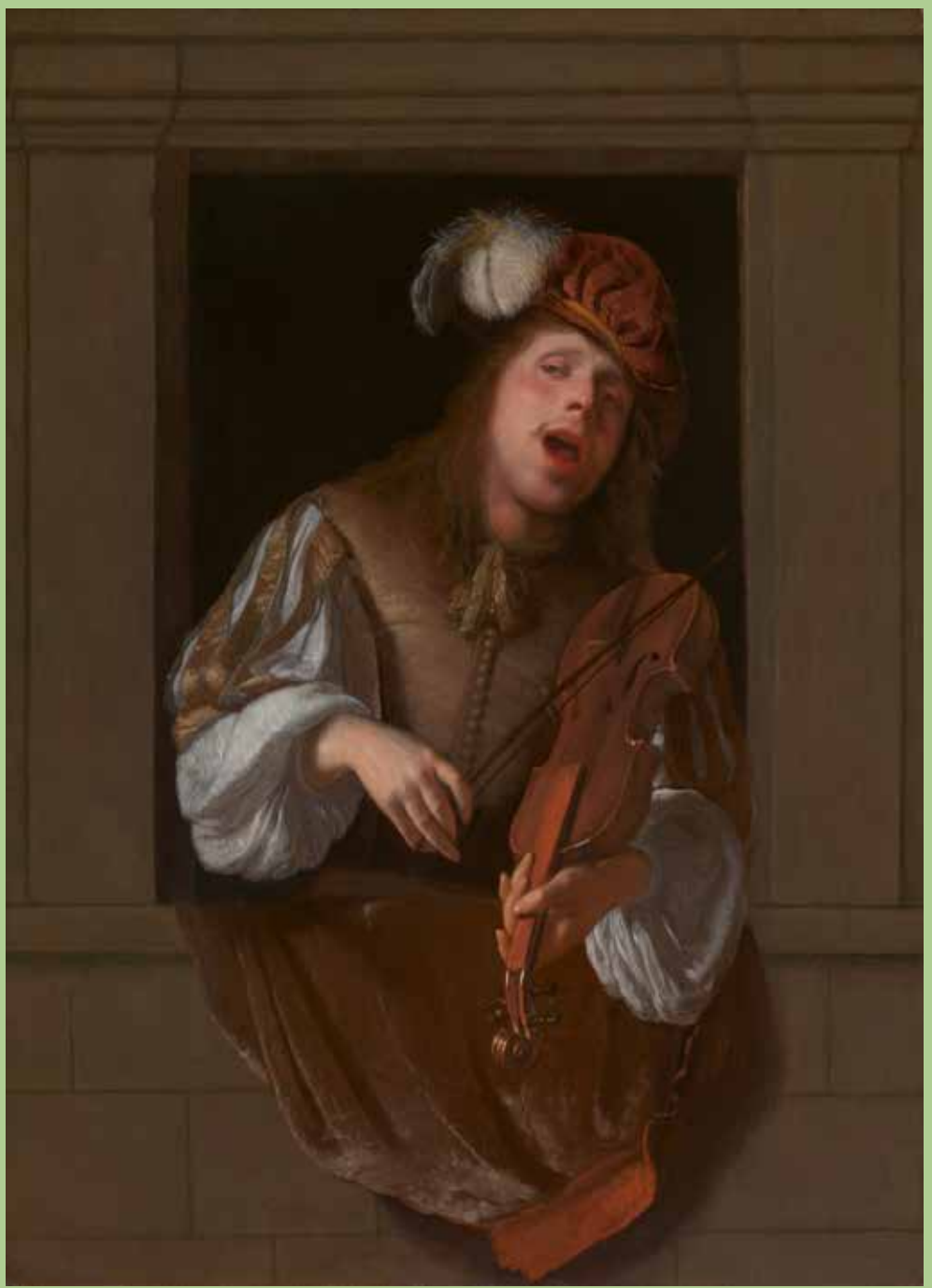
Leonore van Sloten



1. Jacob Ochtervelt, ***Singing Violinist,*** **ca. 1666–70.**

Music as *Burgher* Art?

Countless seventeenth-century Dutch paintings show people making music: at home or at markets, weddings and other parties (figs 1 and 2). If these visual sources are to be believed, there was a lot of playing, whistling and singing in those days. But was that really the case? What role did music play in the daily lives of Rembrandt and his contemporaries?[1]

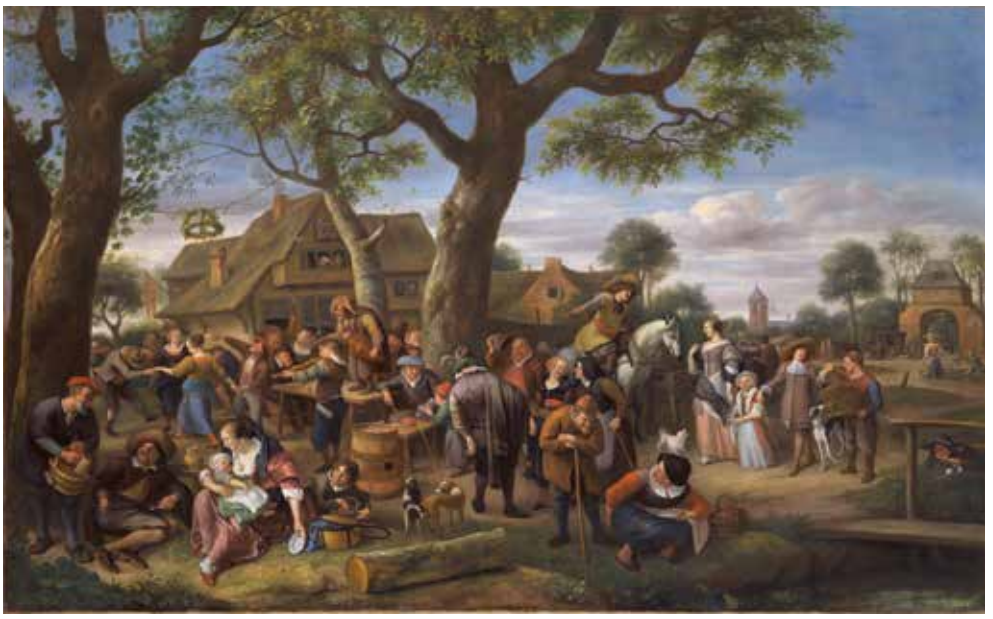
For and by *burghers*

When it came to musical practice, the Northern Netherlands occupied a unique position compared to surrounding countries. In France and England, musicians and artists were appointed by the court, and were required to provide a continuous flow of new musical theatre or other entertainment for the king and his guests. For this reason, the practice of composing new music flourished in those countries. Whilst music in other countries was a court affair, however, in the Northern Netherlands it was a matter for *burghers* or citizens.

The stadholder's court in The Hague showed little interest in music and did not act as a patron. By contrast, city governments employed musicians, who performed daily and on special occasions. Church towers were fitted with increasingly well-tuned bells, thanks to the innovations of the bell founders and brothers Pieter and François Hemony. Carillons were the radio of their day: each day their players broadcast melodies into the city, which could be heard by people in the street and in their homes.

Organists were also paid by the city government to give organ concerts at regular intervals; not as part of the church service, but at other times, for the Protestant Church did not approve of any musical accompaniment to religious services aside from the

1. This essay draws on a previous article by the author, published in November 2017 in *Liedvriend*, the monthly magazine of the Vereniging Vrienden van het Lied. Literature consulted: Louis Peter Grijp (ed.), *Een muziekgeschiedenis der Nederlanden* (Amsterdam, 2001); the digital Nederlandse Liederenbank (song bank) of the Meertens Instituut (www.liederenbank.nl) and the object descriptions in the online collection catalogue of the Leiden Collection (www.theleidencollection.com).



2. Jan Steen, *Peasants Merrymaking Outside an Inn*, ca. 1676.

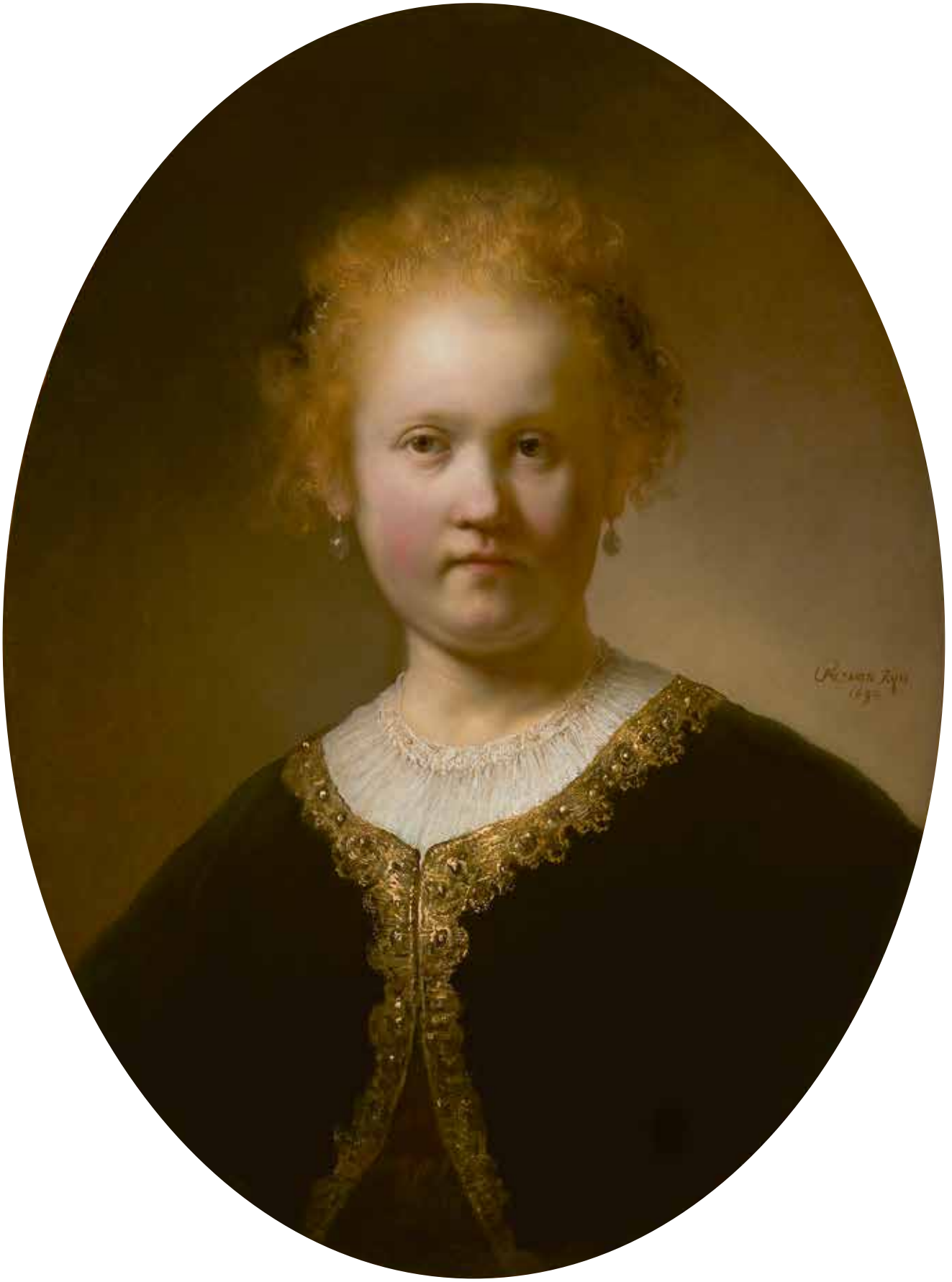
Rembrandt's Humanity
Characters & Expressions

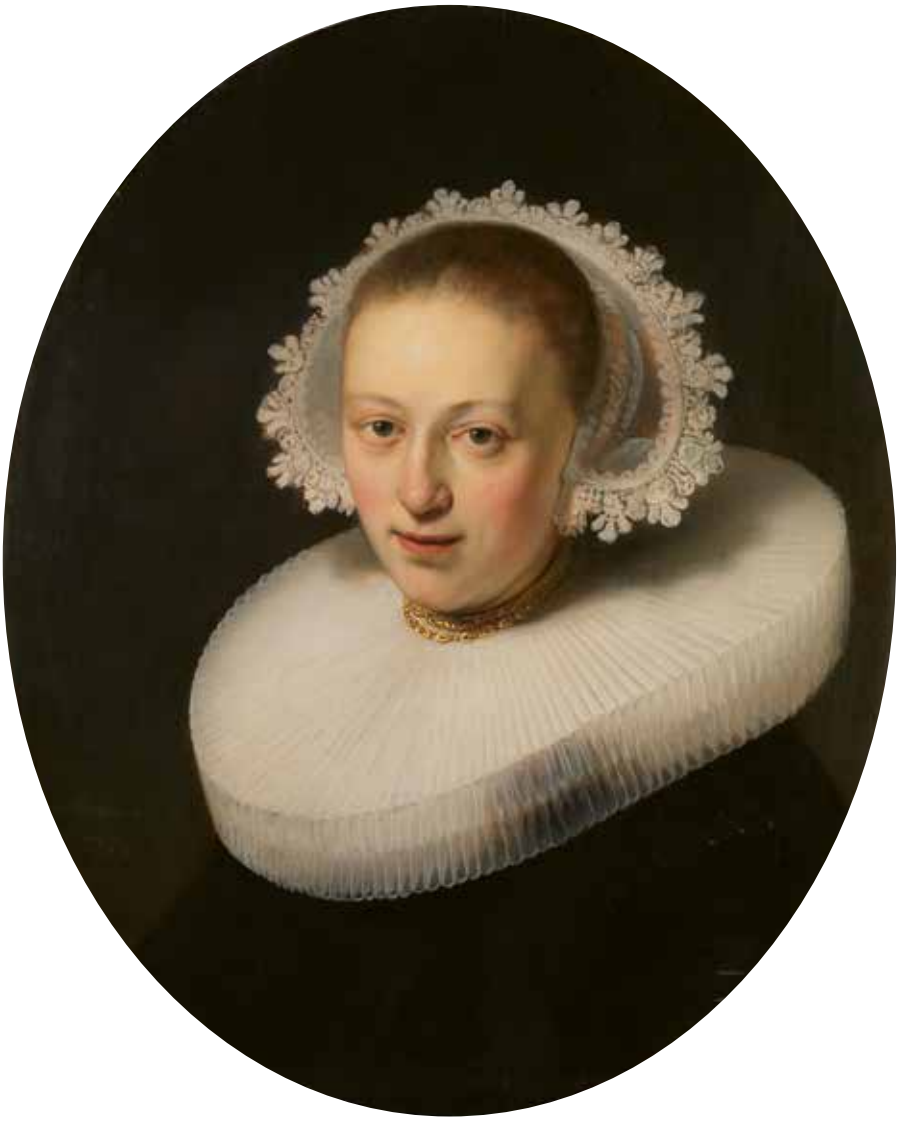
Throughout his career, Rembrandt depicted people from all walks of life. Fascinated with rendering human expressions and emotions, he painted the faces of family members, friends, and assorted compelling individuals. He made head studies, known as *tronies*, from life ('naer het leven'), from memory ('van onthout'), or from the imagination ('uit den gheest'). These figures appear in a range of guises, sometimes wearing everyday clothing, but sometimes dressed in imaginative garments. Rembrandt's *tronies* could be independent works of art, but they also served as preparatory material for larger compositions. For these head studies, Rembrandt often used a loose style of brushwork that injects energy into the sitters' personalities.

In this remarkable painting by Rembrandt, a girl gazes out at the viewer with an inscrutable expression. Light catches her face and reflects off her golden curls. The outfit she wears, a high-necked blouse and cloak edged with gold embroidery, paired with the string of pearls in her hair and pearl ear drops, harkens back to sixteenth-century fashion. Within the oval format, Rembrandt created dynamic vitality by contrasting smoothly blended strokes for the girl's flesh tones with the heavily laden paint used for the patterned white blouse and highlights on the gown's metallic trim. The work's high degree of finish indicates that it was not a study for a history painting. Nor was it a commissioned portrait, given that the same model appears in other paintings by Rembrandt and his workshop from the 1630s. Rather, this work belongs to a group of fanciful portraits, evocative of other times and places, that Rembrandt sold on the open market in the early 1630s with great success.

Rembrandt van Rijn
(Leiden 1606–1669 Amsterdam)
Young Girl in a Gold-Trimmed Cloak,
ca. 1632

oil on panel, oval
59 × 44 cm
(23 1⁄4 × 17 3⁄8 in.)
signed and dated in dark paint along the background, center right: "RHL van Rijn / 1632"





Rembrandt van Rijn (Leiden 1606–1669 Amsterdam)
***Portrait of a Young Woman ("The Middendorf Rembrandt")*, 1633**

oil on panel, oval
62.4 × 50.4 cm
(24 5⁄8 × 19 7⁄8 in.)
signed and dated at lower left: "Rembrant f. ⁄ 1633"

Rembrandt van Rijn executed this bust-length portrait of a young woman with a beguiling gaze and unassuming smile in 1633, shortly after having settled in Amsterdam to head up the workshop of the art dealer Hendrick van Uylenburgh. There Rembrandt quickly attracted the attention of the city's wealthy clientele with his ability to capture the physical and psychological individuality of his sitters. He received dozens of commissions in the 1630s, including *Portrait of a Man in a Red Coat* (1633), *Portrait of Petronella Buys* (1635), and *Portrait of Antonie Coopal* (1635), all of which are in this exhibition. The identity of this sitter is unknown, yet her conservative black dress and modish accessories signify that she belonged to one of the prosperous families who patronized Rembrandt in this period. The artist's technical approach to this work, visible in the complex layering of paint of the woman's intricate lace cap and collar, shows his willingness to experiment within the parameters of a conventional portrait type.

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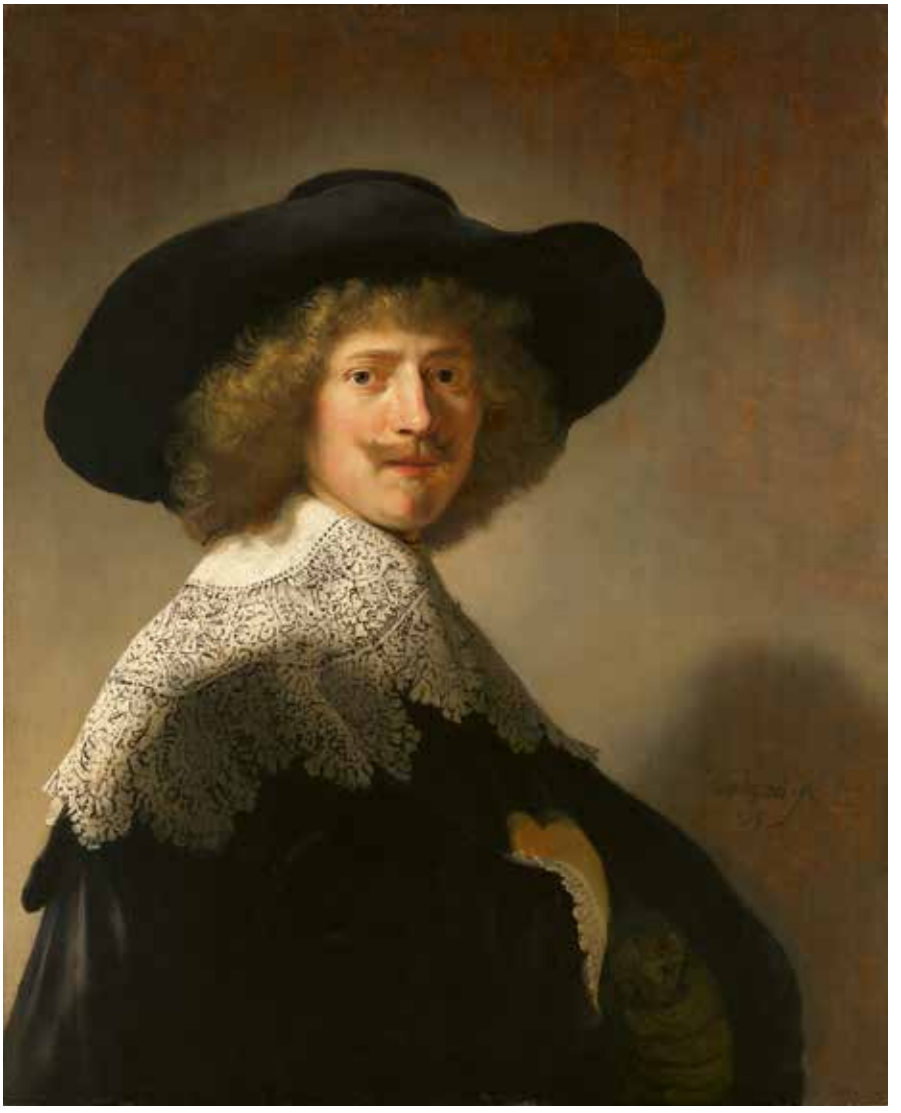
Rembrandt van Rijn and Workshop (Leiden 1606–1669 Amsterdam)
Portrait of Antonie Coopal, 1635

oil on Brazilian chestnut (sucupira)
83.5 × 67.6 cm (32 7⁄8 × 26 5⁄8 in.)
signed and dated in dark paint, lower right: "Rembrandt. ft (followed by three dots set as a triangle)⁄ 1635"



In 1635, only four years after Rembrandt left his native Leiden for Amsterdam, he received an important portrait commission from Antonie Coopal (ca. 1606–1672). A successful politician, Coopal held a series of prominent civic positions in his native Flushing. Rembrandt presumably gained the client through a close family connection: Antonie's brother François was married to Titia van Uylenburgh, the sister of Rembrandt's wife, Saskia. Rembrandt portrayed this prominent figure with a stylish turned-up moustache and carefully manicured chin tuft. Coopal's expansive broad lace collar and cuff, which stands out starkly against his black cloak, were at the height of fashion when he sat for his portrait. Likely because this elaborate lace collar would have been quite time-consuming to paint, Rembrandt enlisted the service of one of his studio assistants to execute this portion of the painting. The panel is made of Brazilian chestnut, an unusual support for Rembrandt, and may have come from a packing crate connected to a shipment from the Americas.

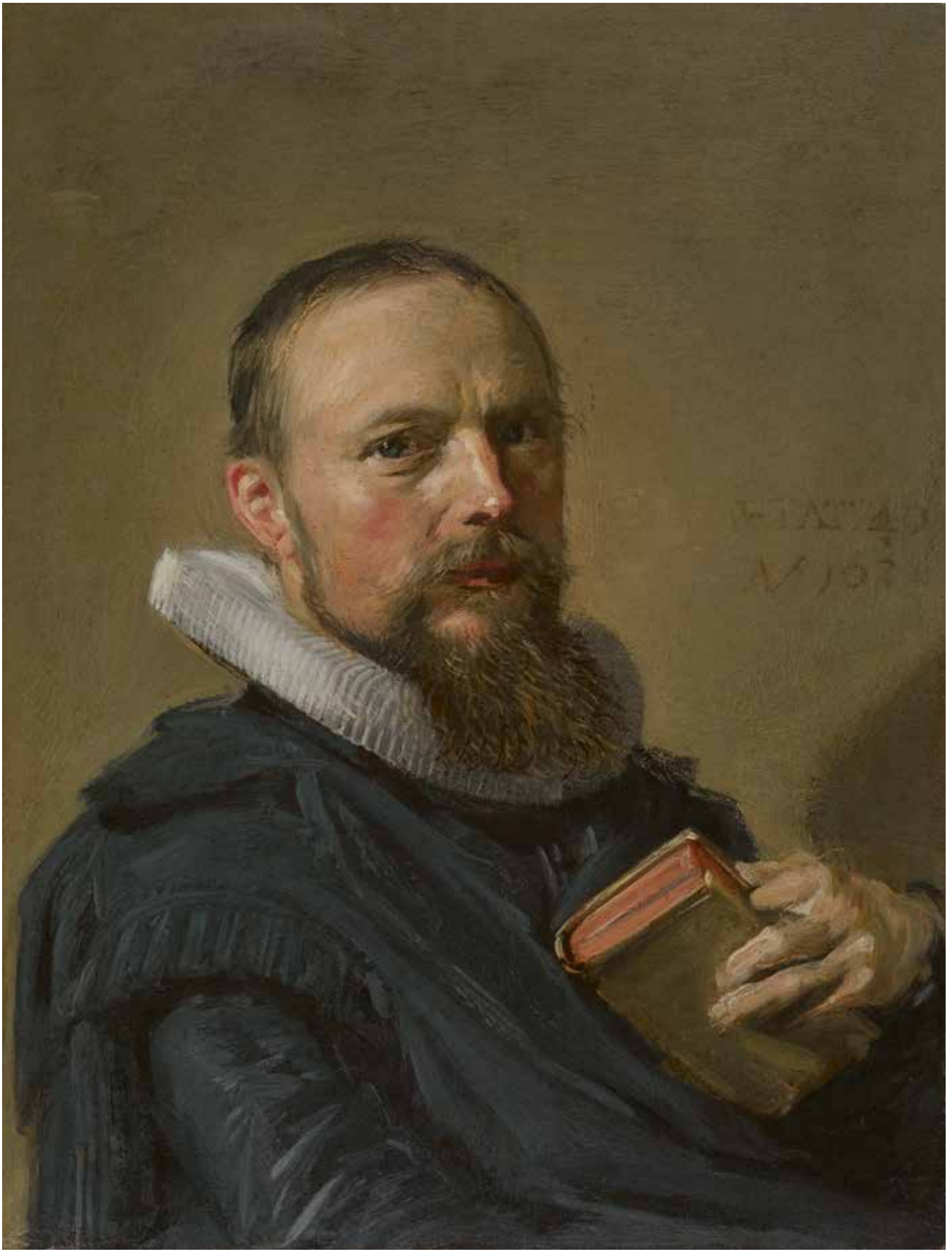
Fashioning Identities

In the 1600s, members of Dutch society desired, and could afford, portraits of themselves and their loved ones. To please this clientele, artists adapted their imagery to fit current trends while also seeking out innovations to distinguish themselves in a competitive art market. In Haarlem, Frans Hals created portraits that showcase his unique aptitude for dynamic brushwork. On the other hand, Gerard ter Borch the Younger, who painted in Zwolle and Deventer, portrayed prosperous citizens in small-scale works that project elegant simplicity and restraint. After 1672, when France invaded the Netherlands, French style of dress came into fashion. Many artists, Casper Netscher among them, adopted a refined style of portraiture that featured carefully blended brushstrokes, smooth skin, luxurious clothing, and elaborate hairstyles.

Frans Hals
(Antwerp 1582/83–1666 Haarlem)
***Portrait of Samuel Ampzing,* 1630**

oil on copper
16.4 × 12.4 cm
(6 1/2 × 4 7/8 in.)
inscribed and dated, center right:
"AETAT 40/ ANo 163.."

For this exquisite portrait, Frans Hals chose a small copper panel to portray Haarlem clergyman, poet, and historian Samuel Ampzing (1590–1632). Ampzing is likely holding the book for which he is best known, *Beschryvinge ende lof der stad Haerlem in Holland* (Description and Praise of the City of Haarlem in Holland). Ampzing published several odes to the city, the first two of which were unillustrated and published anonymously. The 1628 edition published two years before this portrait, however, proudly bears his name as author. Aside from information about Haarlem and its history, the publication includes several engraved views and plans of the city by Jan van de Velde II and Pieter Saenredam. As with other of his small portrait paintings, Hals made this portrait as a model for a print that could be sent to colleagues in other cities as well as collected locally. Along with his collaborator on the *Beschryvinge,* the historian and scholar Petrus Scriverius, Ampzing was an ardent proponent for the Dutch language, and took particular exception to words adopted from Latin or French.



BOOK

This book was published to accompany the exhibition 'Art and Life in Rembrandt's Time' at the H'ART Museum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands (9 April – 24 August 2025) and the Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida, United States (25 October 2025 – 29 March 2026).

Publisher
WBOOKS, Zwolle
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in collaboration with
H'ART Museum, Amsterdam
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Images
All images from The Leiden Collection unless otherwise stated

ISBN 978 94 625 8697 0
(English edition)
ISBN 978 94 625 8696 3
(Dutch edition)

NUR 646

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Thanks to
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Curators
Elizabeth Nogrady
Birgit Boelens

Exhibition design
Carlo Wijnands (3D)
Vanessa van Dam (2D)

Publicity Campaign
Studio Berry Slok

Storyline developer
Tessel ten Zweege