NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ONLINE EDITIONS
Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century

Frans Hals
Dutch, c. 1582/1583 - 1666

Willem Coymans

1645

oil on canvas
overall: 77 x 64 cm (30 5/16 x 25 3/16 in.)
framed: 105.4 x 92.1 x 10.8 cm (41 1/2 x 36 1/4 x 4 1/4 in.)
Inscription: center right: AETA SVAE.22 (second 2 has been changed to a 6) / 1645 [1]

[1] The second numeral of the sitter's age has been changed to a six. Above the inscription is the sitter's coat of arms, consisting of three black cows' heads on a gold field.
Andrew W. Mellon Collection 1937.1.69

ENTRY

With utmost casualness, Willem Coymans has turned to look out at the viewer while resting his right arm lightly on the back of his chair. He is dressed in an elaborately gold embroidered jacket with slit sleeves over a pleated white blouse. His oversized, flat, white linen collar and his modish, pom-pom-embellished black hat, which is pushed forward at a rakish angle, enframe a handsome face with an alert expression. Long wavy hair that reaches to his shoulders completes the impression of a man confident in himself and in his position in society.

This remarkable portrait, which carries so many of the dynamic qualities admired today in Hals' work, was rediscovered only at the end of the nineteenth century. The coat of arms in the right background was immediately recognized as that of the distinguished Coymans family, but the inscribed age of the sitter, twenty-two, did not correlate with any member of the family then known in genealogical studies. Perhaps to make the sitter's age consistent with that of one of the family's most prominent members, Balthasar Coymans, who was born March 15, 1618, the last digit of the age in the inscription was changed from two to six sometime between 1898 and 1907.[1] This identification was generally accepted in the literature from about 1909 until 1958, when Seymour Slive noted the changes in the inscription and concluded that the sitter could not be Balthasar.[2] The proper identification of the sitter as Willem was made only in 1970 by Katrina Taylor on the

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basis of documents in the archives of Amsterdam and Haarlem.[3]

Willem (Guilliam) Coymans was baptized in Amsterdam on August 20, 1623, and was buried in the Church of Saint Bavo in Haarlem on April 28, 1678. He was the son of Coenraet Coymans and Maria Scheryl van Walhorn, who had been married in Antwerp in 1614. Like other members of this large family, Coenraet immigrated to Amsterdam, perhaps to work in the successful family firm of Balthasar Coymans and Brothers. By the 1640s Coenraet seems to have moved to Haarlem, where he was buried in the Church of Saint Bavo on November 29, 1659. Even less is known about Willem's life, but his name appears on notarized business records in Amsterdam and Haarlem.[4] It seems improbable that he married, for his name is not included in a family genealogy that apparently was based on marriage rather than birth records.[5]

Hals had extensive connections with the Coymans family. In 1644 he painted portraits of Willem's enormously wealthy uncle Joseph Coymans (Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford) and his wife, Dorothea Berck (Baltimore Museum of Art).[6] In the early 1650s he painted striking portraits of Joseph's daughter Isabella (Baronne Edouard de Rothschild Collection, Paris) and her husband, Stephanus Geraerdts (Musée Royal des Beaux-Arts, Antwerp).[7] Finally, in 1660, along with Pieter Molijn (Dutch, 1595 - 1661), Hals appraised the paintings listed in the inventory of Coenraet Coymans' effects.[8]

The worldly success of the family is vividly evident in Willem Coymans' demeanor and French mode of dress. Hals utilizes these attributes to convey his sitter's personality and give his image immediacy. With rapid yet certain strokes of the brush he suggests the rich patterns and flickering light on the elegantly embroidered jacket. In perhaps an even greater tour de force he has captured the translucent qualities of the sleeve by applying dense white strokes of paint over layers of gray. A few firm slashes of black complete the modeling. As is characteristic of Hals, the face is more strongly modeled than is the costume; while the touch is firm and bold around the features, the skin on the nose and cheek is relatively smooth.

Hals used the same pose from the mid-1620s, when it first appeared in the portrait *Isaac Abrahamsz Massa* (Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto),[9] until the end of his career. Although this pose had been used in the Netherlands by the late sixteenth century in group portraits in which an artist was faced with the problem of representing figures seated around a table, Hals was the first to recognize its

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potential for portraits of single figures. It was a perfect device for half-length, relatively informal portraits in which he wanted to project the sitter's personality as directly as possible. Aside from the implied movement in the pose, the man's gesture of resting his arm over the back of the chair allows the figure to seemingly break through the picture frame and enter into the viewer's world.

Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.

April 24, 2014

NOTES

[1] The inscription reads "22" in Charles Sedelmeyer, *Illustrated Catalogue of 300 Paintings by Old Masters . . .* (Paris, 1898), 66, but "26" in Sedelmeyer, *Catalogue of Rudolf Kann Collection*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1907), 1:13. Ernest Wilhelm Moes, *Iconographia Batava*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1897–1905), 1:205, no. 1779, first identified the sitter as Balthasar, who was Lord of Streefkerk and Nieuw Lekkerland and town councillor of Haarlem. The biographical data on the Coymans family was first published by Johan E. Elias, *De vroedschap van Amsterdam, 1578–1795*, 2 vols. (Haarlem, 1903–1905), 2:762.

[2] Seymour Slive, "Frans Hals' Portrait of Joseph Coymans," *Wadsworth Atheneum Bulletin* (Winter 1958): 20–21 note 7.

[3] Katrina V. H. Taylor, "A Note on the Identity of a Member of the Coymans Family by Frans Hals," in *Report and Studies in the History of Art 1969* (Washington, DC, 1970), 106–108.

[4] Katrina V. H. Taylor, "A Note on the Identity of a Member of the Coymans Family by Frans Hals," in *Report and Studies in the History of Art 1969* (Washington, DC, 1970), 107.

[5] A. A. Vorsterman van Oijen, *Stam-en wapenboek van aanzienlijke Nederlandsche familiën* (Groningen, 1885).

[6] For the portraits of Joseph Coymans and Dorothea Berck, see Seymour Slive, ed., *Frans Hals*, 3 vols. (London, 1970–1974), 2: pls. 243, 244; 3: nos. 160, 161. For information on the Coymans family, see Seymour Slive, "Frans Hals' Portrait of Joseph Coymans," *Wadsworth Atheneum Bulletin* (Winter 1958): 12–23.

[7] For portraits of Stephanus Geraerdts and Isabella Coymans, see Seymour Slive, ed., *Frans Hals*, 3 vols. (London, 1970–1974), 2: pls. 290, 291; 3: nos. 188, 189.

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[8] Abraham Bredius, “Archiefsprokkels betreffende Frans Hals,” *Oud-Holland* 41, no. 1 (1923–1924): 27.

[9] Seymour Slive, ed., *Frans Hals*, 3 vols. (London, 1970–1974), 2: pl. 64; 3: no. 42.

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The original support is a fine, tightly woven, plain-weave fabric with weave irregularities. It has been lined with the original tacking margins trimmed and the edges of the painting turned over to form the present tacking margins. The reduction in size appears minimal, as marked cusping is present on all sides.

A moderately thick tan ground layer lies under a light brown imprimatura layer. Paint was applied thinly, frequently exposing the imprimatura. Both low and high impasto articulate the sleeve and jacket brocade. Although the paint and ground are cupped, there are only minor flake losses, and abrasion is confined to the edges. The painting was treated in 1986.

PROVENANCE

Coymans family, Haarlem. Mrs. Frederick Wollaston, London. (Sedelmeyer Gallery, Paris), before 1894; Rodolphe Kann [d. 1905], Paris, by 1897; purchased 1907 with the entire Kann collection by (Duveen Brothers, Inc., London, New York, and Paris); sold to Arabella D. [Mrs. Collis P.] Huntington [c. 1850-1924], New York; by inheritance to her son, Archer M. Huntington [1870-1955], New York; purchased 17 May 1928 by (Duveen Brothers, Inc.);[1] sold 7 May 1929 to Andrew W. Mellon, Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C.; deeded 28 December 1934 to The A.W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, Pittsburgh; gift 1937 to NGA.

[1] Duveen Brothers Records, accession number 960015, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles: reel 322, box 467, folder 2 (copies in NGA curatorial files).

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EXHIBITION HISTORY

1909 The Hudson-Fulton Celebration, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1909, no. 37, as Balthasar Coymans.[1]

1928 1928 International Exhibition of Antiques and Art, Olympia, London, 1928, no. X22, as Portrait of Young Koeymanszoon van Ablasserdam.

1939 Masterworks of Five Centuries, The Golden-Gate International Exposition, San Francisco, 1939, no. 80a, repro., as Portrait of Balthasar Coymans, Alderman of Haarlem.

1989 Frans Hals, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Royal Academy of Arts, London; Frans Halsmuseum, Haarlem, 1989-1990, no. 61, repro.

2000 Like Father, Like Son? Portraits by Frans Hals and Jan Hals, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, 2000, pl. 1.

2003 Loan to display with permanent collection, The National Gallery, London, 2003-2004.

2007 Dutch Portraits: The Age of Rembrandt and Frans Hals, The National Gallery, London; Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague, 2007-2008, no. 24, repro.

EXHIBITION HISTORY NOTES

[1] Wilhelm R.Valentiner, *Catalogue of a Loan Exhibition of Paintings by Old Dutch Masters Held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Connection with the Hudson-Fulton Celebration* (New York, 1910), 1:38, notes that the "identification of the person is uncertain."

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part of the Sedelmeyer Gallery. Paris, 1898: 66, no. 54, repro., as *Koeymanszoon van Ablasserdam*.

1900 Bode, Wilhelm von. *Gemälde-sammlung des Herrn Rudolf Kann in Paris*. Vienna, 1900: xviii, pl. 49, as *Koeymanszoon van Ablasserdam*.

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1907 Sedelmeyer, Charles. *Catalogue of Rodolphe Kann Collection*. 2 vols. Paris, 1907: 1:13, 42, no. 40, repro., as *Portrait of Young Koeijmanszoon van Ablasserdam*.

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1908 Lennep, John C. van. "Portraits in the Kann Collection." *The Burlington Magazine* 13, no. 65 (August 1908): 293-294.

1909 "A Portrait by Hals at the Grafton Galleries." *The Burlington Magazine* 16 (October 1909): 109-110, as *Johan Koeijmans*.

1909 Moes, Ernst Wilhelm. *Frans Hals: sa vie et son oeuvre*. Translated by J. de Bosschere. Brussels, 1909: 101, no. 27.

1909 Valentiner, Wilhelm R. *Catalogue of a collection of paintings by Dutch masters of the seventeenth century*. The Hudson-Fulton Celebration 1. Exh. cat. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1909: xv, 38, no. 37, repro., 154, 159, as *Balthasar Coymans, Alderman of Haarlem*.

1910 Valentiner, Wilhelm R. *Catalogue of a Loan Exhibition of Paintings by Old Dutch Masters Held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Connection with the Hudson-Fulton Celebration*. New York, 1910: 6, 145, no. 37, repro. 144., as *Balthasar Coymans, Alderman of Haarlem*.

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1930 Dülberg, Franz. *Frans Hals: Ein Leben und ein Werk*. Stuttgart, 1930: 178-180, repro.

1936 Valentiner, Wilhelm R. *Frans Hals Paintings in America*. Westport, Connecticut, 1936: no. 82, repro.

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