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

Jan de Bray
Dutch, c. 1627 - 1688

Portrait of the Artist's Parents, Salomon de Bray and Anna Westerbaen

1664

oil on panel
overall: 78.1 x 63.5 cm (30 3/4 x 25 in.)
framed: 99.7 x 85.7 x 8.9 cm (39 1/4 x 33 3/4 x 3 1/2 in.)
Gift of Joseph F. McCrindle in memory of his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Feder 2001.86.1

ENTRY

Jan de Bray painted this remarkable double portrait of his parents in 1664, shortly after they had succumbed to the plague that ravaged Haarlem from 1663 to 1664. [1] The stark double-profile pose gives this image a timeless quality that is enhanced by the sitters' simple black dress and the dark, greenish-black cloth hanging behind them. Jan represented his father, Salomon (1597–1664), with his left hand outstretched as though he were about to speak, a rhetorical pose that identifies him as a man who excelled at intellectual pursuits. Such associations are reinforced by the black skullcap, dark mantle, and simple white collar—all common elements of scholarly attire. Anna (c. 1605–1663), the painter's mother, is depicted in similarly sober fashion, wearing a pointed skullcap and a fanciful silk cloak.

Salomon de Bray was a painter, architect, and urban planner who probably learned to paint in his native Amsterdam before moving to Haarlem to study with Hendrick Goltzius (Dutch, 1558 - 1617) and Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem (Dutch, 1562 - 1638). Following their teachings, which emphasized a theoretical foundation, Salomon soon took on a leading role in Haarlem as a classicist artist. In the 1630s he was a key player in the reorganization of the Saint Luke's Guild, a reform that rewarded leading painters and architects with positions of authority in the guild. [2] As an architect and urban planner, Salomon sought to bring classical order to buildings as well as to a planned (but never realized) expansion of Haarlem. A devout Catholic, he was also a poet and a member of the rhetorician's society.

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Anna Westerbaen, who married Salomon de Bray in 1625, came from an intellectual and artistic family in The Hague. She was the sister of the poet and physician Jacob Westerbaen (c. 1600–1670) and of the portrait painter Jan Westerbaen (c. 1600–after 1677), who may well have instructed Jan de Bray in the art of that genre. [3]

De Bray presumably painted this work between May 11, 1664, the date of his father's death, and June 17, 1664, when the artist stated in his will that he would bequeath "the likeness of his foresaid deceased father and mother standing in a single piece and painted from the side" to Gaeff Meynertsz Fabritius (1602–1666), who was a goldsmith and, like Salomon, an important member of the Saint Luke's Guild. [4] It is more significant, however, that in 1664 Fabritius served as burgomaster of Haarlem. [5] De Bray stipulated that Fabritius would receive this double portrait, as well as a (now-lost) self-portrait, on the condition that the burgomaster would in turn bequeath the two paintings to the city of Haarlem. [6] This requirement indicates that De Bray saw these works as commemorative portraits to be viewed and admired by future generations of Haarlem's citizens. [7] De Bray outlived Fabritius, however, hence the terms of this bequest were never realized. The painting's subsequent history is unknown until 1868, when it was sold in Paris as part of the J. C. Robinson collection (see Provenance). In 1664 Jan, in collaboration with his brother Dirck de Bray (Dutch, active 1651/1678), who was a printmaker, produced a second commemorative portrait of his father [fig. 1], a woodcut image based on a drawing he had made in 1657 (Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin).

Technical examinations indicate that De Bray initially painted Salomon's left arm hanging at his side: x-radiographs [see X-radiography] reveal a series of vertically angled highlights that accented the inner edge of his upper arm when it was in that position [fig. 2]. In the first stage of the painting Anna wore a dress with a pleated white collar. The important compositional change in the position of Salomon's left arm may have required a modification in the painting's format. De Bray extended the original panel with additions at both the left and the right, presumably to provide more space around the figures. [8]

The profile portrait was a common format on Roman coins, cameos, and celebratory medals depicting individuals of high birth and rank. This tradition was revived in Renaissance portraits of famous men and women and is also found in the seventeenth-century Netherlands, specifically in representations of the Prince and Princess of Orange painted in the early 1630s by Gerrit van Honthorst (Dutch,

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1592 - 1656) and Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch, 1606 - 1669). [9] Salomon, too, had used the format in a painting of a young woman in strict profile from the 1630s. [10] Jan de Bray's use of overlapping profile portraits, however, is rarely found in seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish painting. Among the few precedents is Agrippina and Germanicus, c. 1614 [fig. 3], by Sir Peter Paul Rubens (Flemish, 1577 - 1640). Rubens, who studied and collected antique cameos and medallions, explicitly adapted this format for this painting of Roman aristocrats. Even more pertinent to the conceptual ideas underlying De Bray's painting is a double portrait of the artist and his wife by the Antwerp master Hendrik van Balen (c. 1574/1575–1632), meant to be placed above their tombstone. [11] The profile format was used often for portraits of the deceased. Whether or not De Bray was familiar with these Flemish evocations of a cameo double portrait, he chose a similar pose to imbue his parents' image with classical ideals of dignity and permanence. [12]

De Bray's restrained brushwork and meticulous modeling of forms perfectly complemented the commemorative nature of this double portrait. He precisely rendered the specific physiognomy of each of his parents, from his mother's high forehead and curved nostrils to the subtle creases around his father's deeply set eyes. With great sensitivity to both line and volume he indicated the glistening strands of Salomon's wavy hair and thin goatee. He captured the differences of texture in the clothes, from the soft, velvety quality of his father's black robe to the smoothness of his stiff white collar, carefully bending up its lower edge to enhance the image's three-dimensionality. Unlike his Haarlem compatriot Frans Hals (Dutch, c. 1582/1583 - 1666), whose broadly brushed and freely rendered portraits suggest both physical and psychological movement, De Bray achieved the lifelike character of these posthumous portraits through the sitters' penetrating gazes and the sheen of their skin, and through Salomon's restrained yet rhetorically eloquent gesture. Through these means De Bray sought to keep the dead alive in the memory of the living. [13]

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COMPARATIVE FIGURES

fig. 1 Dirck de Bray, after Jan de Bray, *Solomon de Bray*, 1664, woodcut on laid paper, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection

fig. 2 X-radiograph composite, Jan de Bray, *Portrait of the Artist's Parents, Salomon de Bray and Anna Westerbaen*, 1664, oil on panel, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Joseph F. McCrindle in memory of his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Feder

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fig. 3 Sir Peter Paul Rubens, *Agrippina and Germanicus*, c. 1614, oil on panel, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Fund

NOTES

[1] The painting, which is not dated, has also been placed earlier in De Bray's career: Joachim Wolfgang Von Moltke, "Jan de Bray," *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 11–12 (1938–1939): 426, dated it about 1661, and Jeroen Giltaij, in *Dutch Classicism in Seventeenth-Century Painting,* ed. Albert Blankert (Rotterdam, 1999), 276–279, no. 53, dated it around 1660.

[2] Salomon de Bray is mentioned as an assayer (*vinder*) on the board of the Saint Luke's Guild in Haarlem in 1632, 1633, and 1639, and as the head of the guild (*deken*) in 1634 and 1640. Until 1640 he is identified as an architect (*architekt*). In 1640, however, he is mentioned as a painter also (*schilder en bouwmeester*). Hessel Miedema, *De archiefbescheiden van het St. Lukasgilde te Haarlem: 1497–1798*, 2 vols. (Alphen aan den Rijn, 1980), 2:1057–1058.

[3] De Bray painted a portrait of his mother in 1657 (National Gallery, London).

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See Pieter Biesboer, ed., *Painting Family: The De Brays, Master Painters of 17th Century Holland* (Zwolle, 2008), no. 19, 72–73.

[4] Gaeff Meynertsz Fabritius appears in the records of the guild of gold- and silversmiths (which was part of the Saint Luke's Guild until 1639) as an assayer (*keurmeester*) in 1627 and 1636. (The terms *vinder* and *keurmeester* both mean assayer, a person in charge of quality control.) In 1635 Fabritius was both the head (*deken*) of the board of the gold- and silversmiths and the main assayer as well as the treasurer (*penningmeester*) of the board of the Saint Luke's Guild. In 1634 and 1640, both years that Salomon de Bray was the head of the Guild, Fabritius was part of the board as well (either as assayer or as assayer and treasurer). In the general guild records Fabritius is identified as a goldsmith (*goudsmid*) until 1640, when he is said to be an engraver and sculptor (*graveerder en figuursnijder*). Hessel Miedema, *De archiefbescheiden van het St. Lukasgilde te Haarlem: 1497–1798*, 2 vols. (Alphen aan den Rijn, 1980), 2:1050–1051, 1057–1058.

[5] See Pieter Biesboer, ed., *Painting Family: The De Brays, Master Painters of 17th Century Holland* (Zwolle, 2008), no. 6, 88.

[6] See Jeroen Giltaij in Albert Blankert, ed., *Dutch Classicism in Seventeenth-Century Painting* (Rotterdam, 1999), 279 n. 4: "het conterfeytsel van sijn voorn. overleden vader ende moeder staende in een stuck ende van ter seyden geschildert."

[7] Jan de Bray also painted two large *portraits historiés* depicting members of his extended family, including Salomon and Anna, as participants at the *Banquet of Antony and Cleopatra* (the first, dated 1652, is at Hampton Court in the collection of her Majesty the Queen; and the second, dated 1669, is in the Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire). These paintings also commemorated the ideals for which the De Bray family stood and the lasting bonds that united parents, children, and spouses. See Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Jan de Bray and the Classical Tradition*, exh. brochure (National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 2004), 10–12, no. 4.

[8] The additional panels measure 4 centimeters at the left and 5.2 centimeters at the right. For further discussion of these changes, see Technical Notes.

[9] See Peter van der Ploeg et al., *Princely Patrons: The Collection of Frederick Henry of Orange and Amalia of Solms in the Hague* (The Hague, 1997), 132–134, nos. 9a–b.

[10] Rose-Marie and Eijk van Otterloo Collection. See Frederik J. Duparc, ed., *Golden: Dutch and Flemish Masterworks from the Rose-Marie and Eijk van Otterloo Collection* (New Haven, 2011), no.13, 100–105.

[11] For an image of this double portrait (Hendrik van Balen, *Self-Portrait with His Wife, Margareta Briers,* c. 1625, Sint-Jacobskerk, Antwerp), see Rudolf

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Ekkart and Quentin Buvelot, eds., *Dutch Portraits: The Age of Rembrandt and Frans Hals* (London, 2007), 88, fig. 6a, and Pieter Biesbooer, ed., *Painting Family: The De Brays, Master Painters of 17th Century Holland* (Zwolle, 2008), 92, fig. 29a. There is no evidence, however, that De Bray ever traveled to Antwerp.

[12] In this respect, De Bray's double portrait differs from Jacob van Campen's *Double Portrait of Constantijn Huygens and Suzanna van Baerle,* c. 1635 (Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague), because of the momentary quality of Suzanna's pose as she turns and looks out at the viewer. For this portrait, see Ben Broos and Ariane van Suchtelen, eds., *Portraits in the Mauritshuis, 1430–1790* (The Hague, 2004), 63–68.

[13] I would like to thank Perry Chapman for stressing this point to me.

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The painting was executed on a panel constructed from three boards of vertically grained white oak.[1] The back of the panel is beveled but shims have been attached to the beveled areas to accommodate a cradle. The ground is composed of two layers: a light gray layer under a brownish gray one. Though the green background paint was found to be consistent on all three boards, the layers between the ground and the green paint differ. Both the right and left boards contain a dark gray layer over the ground. This layer is absent from the center plank, but both the center and left boards contain a buff colored layer just below the green background, which is absent from the right plank. Despite these inconsistencies, the pigments of the green paint are consistent on all three boards[2] and the brushstrokes of the green paint continue across the joins, indicating that the two outer boards were added by the artist before the background was painted.

De Bray used a series of short, discrete brushstrokes to apply the paint with low impasto. He built up the flesh tones with opaque paint, but used glazes in the dark areas. The X-radiographs show several artist's changes: the woman's dress was simplified and it originally had a collar that was painted out; the man's arm was not originally raised.

The painting is in good condition. The panel exhibits a few short vertical splits extending down from the top edge and up from the bottom edge. There are minor scattered indentations and chips in the support along the edges. There is old

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damage in the lower right corner adjacent to the join line. The inpainting in this area has discolored. There is additional old inpainting in the man's sleeve, close to his wrist. The painting has not undergone treatment at the National Gallery of Art.

[1] The wood was analyzed by the NGA Scientific Research department (see report dated December 29, 2010, in NGA Conservation department files). All three boards were found to be white oak.

[2] Cross-sections from all three boards were taken and analyzed with light microscopy as well as scanning electron microscopy in conjunction with energy dispersive spectroscopy (SEM/EDS) by the NGA Scientific Research department (see report dated December 29, 2010, in NGA Conservation department files).

PROVENANCE

The artist [c. 1627-1697]; possibly bequeathed to Gaeff Fabritius, former burgomaster of Haarlem.[1] John Charles Robinson [1824-1913], London; (his sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 7-8 May 1868, no. 11); Reiset, for Princess Mathilde [1820-1904, née Mathilde L.M. Bonaparte], Paris;[2] (her estate sale, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, 17-21 May 1904, 1st day, no. 21). Agénor, duc de Gramont [1857-1925], Paris; (his sale, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, 22 May 1925, no. 7); Joseph Fuller Feder [d. 1944], New York;[3] by inheritance to his daughter, Mrs. George Monroe Moffett [d. 1956, née Odette Feder, formerly the Countess du Bourg de Bozas and Mrs. J. Ronald McCrindle], New York;[4] by inheritance to her son, Joseph F. McCrindle [1923-2008], New York; gift 2001 to NGA.

[1] The artist drew up his first will on 17 June 1664, leaving his entire estate to his younger brother, Dirck, and bequeathing "...to the Honourable Gaeff Fabritius, erstwhile burgomaster of the city of Haarlem, a portrait of his testator and a portrait of his late father and mother, standing and viewed from the side, providing that on the death of the said Gaeff Fabritius both portraits shall pass to the city of Haarlem." ("Ten tweede aen den E. Heere Gaeff Fabritius oudt burgenmeester deser voorn. Stadt Haerlem sijns Testateuren conterfeystel metter pleth, mitsgaders het conterfeytsel van sijn voorn. overleden vader ende moeder staende in een stuck ende van ter seyden geschildert mits dat beyde de voorn.

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conterfeytsels naert overlijden van den voorn. Gaeff Fabritius sullen moeten commen ende vervallen aende voorn. Stadt Haerlem.") The artist eventually drew up six wills, the last in 1683, and after incurring debts he could not pay, applied for a dispossession order and was declared bankrupt in 1689. (See Jeroen Giltaij in *Dutch Classicism in Seventeenth-Century Painting*, ed. Albert Blankert [exh. cat., Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Städtelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt 1999-2000], Rotterdam, 1999: 276-279.)

[2] An annotated copy of the sales catalogue in the NGA Library indicates that the painting was acquired by Reiset for Princess Mathilde. It is not known where or when Robinson, who was curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, acquired the painting.

[3] Annotated copy of sales catalogue, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Feder also acquired Largillierre's *Portrait of a Young Man with His Tutor* (NGA 1961.9.26) at this sale. A photograph in the NGA curatorial files of the Feder apartment in The Sherry-Netherland on Fifth Avenue in New York shows the painting hanging in the living room.

[4] According to the entry in *Dutch and Flemish Paintings from New York Private Collections*, exh. cat., National Academy of Design, New York, 1988: no. 6, which refers to an annotated catalogue in the Frick Art Reference Library, New York.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

1957 Loan to display with permanent collection, Brooklyn Museum of Art, 1957-1981.

1980 Dutch Seventeenth-Century Portraiture: The Golden Age, The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, 1980-1981, no. 13, repro.

1981 Loan to display with permanent collection, The Art Museum, Princeton University, 1981-1999.

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1988 Dutch and Flemish Paintings from New York Private Collections, National Academy of Design, New York, 1988, no. 6, repro.

1999 Dutch Classicism in Seventeenth-Century Painting, Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, 1999-2000, no. 53, repro.

2000 Small Northern European Portraits from The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2000, brochure checklist no. 39.

2005 Jan De Bray and the Classical Tradition, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2005, brochure no. 2, repro.

2007 Dutch Portraits: The Age of Rembrandt and Frans Hals, The National Gallery, London; Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague, 2007-2008, no. 6, repro.

2008 Painting Family: The De Brays, Master Painters of 17th Century Holland, Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem; Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, 2008, no. 29, repro.

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1999 Blankert, Albert. *Dutch classicism in seventeenth-century painting*. Exh. cat. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main. Rotterdam, 1999: 276-279, 299 no. 53,

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repro.

2004 Broos, Ben P. J., and Ariane van Suchtelen. *Portraits in the Mauritshuis, 1430-1790*. The Hague, 2004: 64.

2004 Wheelock, Arthur K., Jr. *Jan de Bray and the Classical Tradition*. Exhibition brochure. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 2004: 8-9, no. 2, repro.

2005 Van Wagenberg-Ter Hoeven, Anke A. "A Matter of Mistaken Identity. In Search of a New Title for Rubens's *Tiberius and Agrippina*." *Artibus et historiae* 26, no. 52 (2005): 116, 117 fig. 3, 126 n. 9.

2007 Ekkart, Rudolf E.O., and Quentin Buvelot. *Dutch portraits: the age of Rembrandt and Frans Hals*. Translated by Beverly Jackson. Exh. cat. National Gallery, London; Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague. London, 2007: 88-89, no. 6, repro.

2008 Biesboer, Pieter, ed. *Painting Family: the De Brays: Master Painters of the 17th century Holland*. Exh. cat. Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem; Dulwich Picture Gallery, London. Zwolle, 2008: 92-93, no. 29, repro.

2012 Grasselli, Margaret M., and Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., eds. *The McCrindle Gift: A Distinguished Collection of Drawings and Watercolors*. Exh. cat. National Gallery of Art. Washington, 2012: 5, 14, fig. 2, 19, repro. 184.

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2014 Wheelock, Arthur K, Jr. "The Evolution of the Dutch Painting Collection." *National Gallery of Art Bulletin* no. 50 (Spring 2014): 2-19, repro.

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