



Johannes Cornelisz Verspronck  
Dutch, 1606/1609 - 1662

## *Andries Stilte as a Standard Bearer*

1640

oil on canvas

overall: 104 x 78.5 cm (40 15/16 x 30 7/8 in.)

framed: 137.2 x 111.8 x 8.9 cm (54 x 44 x 3 1/2 in.)

Inscription: lower left: :1640:

Patrons' Permanent Fund 1998.13.1

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### ENTRY

With great bravura, this fashionably clad member of one of the Haarlem civic guards stands with one arm akimbo, staring out at the viewer.[1] His proud character, reinforced by the panache of his brilliant pink, silver-lace-trimmed satin costume and jauntily placed hat with its brightly colored feathers, conveys the outward confidence prized by the Dutch during the formative years of the republic.

This remarkable life-sized, half-length portrait depicts Andries Stilte, a wealthy burgher in Haarlem whose identity is confirmed by the family coat of arms in the upper left.[2] Verspronck portrayed Stilte in his role as standard bearer, or ensign, of Haarlem's *Kloveniers* (or Saint Hadrian) militia company, which had been formed in 1519.[3] Civic guard companies in the Netherlands had played an important military role in the early phases of the Dutch Revolt, but by the mid-seventeenth century their martial significance had waned as the fight against Spanish forces shifted, toward the end of the revolt, to the southern part of the United Provinces.[4] Indeed, by 1640, when Verspronck painted this work, the Haarlem civic guards had become more like social clubs, serving only the occasional ceremonial or symbolic function.[5]

Officers of the Haarlem militia companies were chosen from wealthy regent families and their positions held great social status. Andries Stilte proudly bears the blue sash and standard of his company (the blue company) that was part of the *Kloveniers*. He wears a sword hanging from his bandolier, which, like the rest of the ensign's wardrobe, was traditionally determined by the individual's family

background, taste, and wealth.[6] His bright pink outfit is exceptional in its elegance and refinement, and was probably worn only to a banquet or other ceremonial gathering. The idea that an ensign's outfit should be colorful goes back to the prestigious but also dangerous historical function of a standard bearer within the civic guard. Along with the captain and the lieutenant, the ensign traditionally stood at the front of the infantry, where he held aloft the company's standard. His brightly colored clothing was meant to bring attention to his person, making the commanders less of a target. Because the position involved a high risk of being shot, standard bearers were required to be bachelors.[7]

Although Stilte was probably elected ensign in 1639, he served in this position only until 1640, when he became engaged to his first wife, Eva Reyniers, and therefore had to resign as ensign.[8] After his marriage, Stilte would no longer be allowed to wear his elegant and brightly colored finery, so he must have commissioned this portrait to commemorate his status, and his wardrobe, before he assumed another position in the company that required a more sedate attire.[9] Although life-sized portraits of individual standard bearers are rare in Dutch art, the pose—a standing figure holding the flag over one shoulder with the other arm akimbo—is one traditionally found in group portraits of militia companies.[10]

In commissioning this portrait Stilte probably chose Verspronck over his more famous contemporary Frans Hals (Dutch, c. 1582/1583 - 1666) for two essential reasons. Verspronck already had portrayed Andries' brother Mattheus in 1636, and Stilte would have known that Verspronck was able to create an accurate and engaging likeness of his sitters.[11] He also would have appreciated the artist's mastery at rendering fabrics with his smooth and modulated manner of painting. Stilte had clearly spared no expense when ordering his wardrobe, and he must have been determined to have it shown to best effect. He would have wanted the artist to show off the sheen of his satin jacket as well as the various types of expensive lace that helped give his outfit such glitz: the Flemish bobbin lace tied with a lime-green bow around his neck and the silver lace edging on his split-sleeve jacket. No less significant were the gold trim on his blue sash and the brightly colored ostrich-feather plumes decorating his beaver-skin hat. Indeed, if one is to judge from pentimenti in the painting, the hat and feathers were even larger in reality than they now appear.[12]

This depiction of Stilte is exceptional because during Verspronck's long and successful artistic career he generally painted half-length portraits of middle-class burghers in relatively subdued attire.[13] Stilte's animated pose, whereby he looks

out at the viewer over his shoulder, however, does relate to a small-scale, full-length portrait of an unknown gentleman standing in an architectural setting that Verspronck painted in 1639 (private collection).[14] The character of this latter work seems to have appealed to Stilte, for he commissioned Verspronck to make a small-scale variant of his half-length portrait in the same format as that painting [fig. 1]. [15] In this variant Stilte wears an elegant but far more subdued outfit, appropriate for a wealthy Dutch burgher.

Verspronck's painting has been trimmed slightly at the left: the end of the flagstaff is slightly cut at the edge of the painting.[16] The artist's signature, which was originally to the left of the date, 1640, in the lower left corner of the painting, is no longer evident.[17]

Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.

April 24, 2014

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## COMPARATIVE FIGURES



**fig. 1** Johannes Cornelisz Verspronck, *Portrait of Andries Stilte*, c. 1641, oil on canvas, Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio

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## NOTES

- [1] I would like to thank Lynn Russell for her help in preparing this entry.
- [2] Andries Stilte was the son of Mattheus Stilte and Hester Monnicx. His year of birth is not known, but he died after 1675. Biographical information is taken from R. E. O. Ekkart, *Johannes Cornelisz. Verspronck. Leven en werken van een Haarlems portretschilder uit de 17-de eeuw* (Haarlem, 1979), 78, no. 18.
- [3] There were two militia companies in Haarlem in the seventeenth century, the Saint Hadrian company (*Kloveniers*) and the Saint George, also referred to as the *Oude Voetboog* (Old Cross-Bow) company. In the sixteenth century there had also been a third group, the Saint Sebastian Guild, for men who could afford only a hand bow. This militia company was disbanded in 1560. By the seventeenth century the militia companies had lost their original religious character and were under the control of city authorities. For an overview of the militia companies in Haarlem, see Seymour Slive, *Frans Hals*, 3 vols. (London, 1970), 1:39–49. For the history of the building, referred to as the *Kloveniersdoelen*, which still exists in the center of Haarlem, see: P. T. E. E. Rosenberg, “Doelengebouwen en doelenterreinen in de Hollandse steden,” in *Schutters in Holland: Kracht en zenuwen van de stad*, ed. M. Carasso-Kok and J. Levy-van Halm, (Haarlem, 1988), 60–67.
- [4] Haarlem militia companies had fought against Spanish forces in defense of the city in 1572–1573.
- [5] Seymour Slive, *Frans Hals*, 3 vols. (London, 1970), 1:42. Throughout the period, Dutch militia companies continued to be responsible for guarding their respective towns. See Egbert Haverkamp Begemann, *Rembrandt, the Nightwatch*, Princeton Essays on the Arts 12 (Princeton, 1982). See also M. Carasso-Kok and J. Levy-van Halm, eds., *Schutters in Holland: Kracht en*

*zenuwen van de stad* (Haarlem, 1988).

- [6] Seymour Slive, *Frans Hals*, 3 vols. (London, 1970), 1:41, notes that the officer corps of the two civic guard groups consisted of eleven officers: a colonel, a provost, three captains, three lieutenants, and three ensigns. Each civic guard group was divided into three companies, designated orange, white, and blue, the colors of the Dutch flag. Stilte, thus, belonged to the “blue” company of the *Kloveniers*.
- [7] The municipality of Haarlem established this stipulation so it would not be encumbered with the expense of supporting an ensign’s widow and their children.
- [8] Eva died in 1645, and Stilte later married the widower Lijsbeth Valck.
- [9] Stilte subsequently became a lieutenant in the *Kloveniers*. He was portrayed in this role in 1642 in a militia company painting by Pieter Claesz Soutman (Flemish, c. 1580 - 1657), at the Frans Hals Museum, in which he stands at the far left (and, interestingly, carries a flag even though he was no longer a standard bearer). This motif hints at the possibility that Soutman could have used the Verspronck portrait as his model.
- [10] For the tradition of the depiction of standard bearers in group portraits of militia companies, see the figure at the left in Frans Hals’ 1616 depiction of the Saint George militia company in the Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem (Seymour Slive, *Frans Hals*, 3 vols. [London, 1970], 2:5–7, no. 7). For individual portraits of standard bearers, see the full-length portrait of a standard bearer from The Hague, 1617, by Everard Quirijisz van der Maes (1577–1656), in M. Carasso-Kok and J. Levy-van Halm, eds., *Schutters in Holland: Kracht en zenuwen van de Stad* (Haarlem, 1988), 386, no. 196. Thomas de Keyser (Dutch, 1596/1597 - 1667) painted a full-length but smaller than life-sized depiction of *Loef Vredericx as a Standard Bearer* in 1626. See Rudi Ekkart and Quentin Buvelot, eds., *Dutch Portraits: The Age of Rembrandt and Frans Hals* (London, 2007), 148, no. 33.
- [11] Rudolf E. O. Ekkart, *Johannes Cornelisz. Verspronck. Leven en werken van een Haarlems portretschilder uit de 17-de eeuw* (Haarlem, 1979), 71, no. 6. The portrait is in the Museo Nacional, Havana. One often finds that Dutch families retained strong relationships with individual artists over the years.
- [12] Over the centuries, the top layers of paint have become more transparent so that today traces of the plumes’ original placement are visible. See Technical Summary.
- [13] See Rudolf E. O. Ekkart, *Johannes Cornelisz. Verspronck. Leven en werken van een Haarlems portretschilder uit de 17-de eeuw* (Haarlem, 1979).
- [14] See Rudolf E. O. Ekkart, *Johannes Cornelisz. Verspronck. Leven en werken van een Haarlems portretschilder uit de 17-de eeuw* (Haarlem, 1979), 38–39, 77, no. 16. Ekkart believes that this painting is stylistically connected to

works by the Utrecht painter Jacob Duck (Dutch, c. 1600 - 1667), and suggests that Duck may have been in Haarlem in these years.

- [15] See Rudolf E. O. Ekkart, *Johannes Cornelisz. Verspronck. Leven en werken van een Haarlems portretschilder uit de 17-de eeuw* (Haarlem, 1979), 39–40, 82, no. 26.
- [16] W. Martin, *Alt-holländische Bilder* (Berlin 1921), 172–173, noted, however, that at that time the painting had suffered badly from lifting paint, and recommended that it be relined.
- [17] W. Martin, ed., *Königliche gemälde Galerie Mauritshuis: Kurzgefasster Katalog der Gemälde- und Skulpturensammlung* (The Hague, 1920), 84, notes that the dimensions of the painting were then 103 x 77.5 cm, and that the remnants of a signature “. . . onck 1640” were then to be found. Verspronck generally signed his name: “J. vSpronck” followed by the date. Perhaps Martin had only measured the painting inside the frame, which would account for the discrepancy with the current dimensions.
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## TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The support is a coarse, plain-weave fabric, which has been lined. The tacking margins have been removed and the X-radiographs reveal strong cusping on the right side, fainter cusping on the left, and very faint cusping along the top and bottom edges. The cusping is often stronger in one direction due to the warp and weft of the fabric, which could explain the shallower cusping on the top and bottom, but the faint cusping on the left side indicates that this edge was cut down slightly. This theory is supported by the fact that the handle of the standard is cut off on this edge and the painting bears a date, but no signature. It stands to reason that the artist's signature would have preceded the date, as it often does in his paintings.

Verspronck used a thin, white or buff-colored ground to prepare the support. Infrared reflectography at 2.0-2.5 microns<sup>[1]</sup> revealed thin lines of underdrawing, which are most noticeable in the face, hair, hat, and flagpole. The thin paint was applied mostly using a wet-into-wet technique. Verspronck used some glazes, mostly in the red areas. He employed the butt end of his brush to scrape away the paint to create the details in the sitter's lace and gloves. Numerous pentimenti are visible in normal light and with infrared reflectography, most notably: Stilte's hat was moved up and to the right but the feathers were moved down and to the left; his face was moved to the left; and the angle of the standard was originally more

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vertical.

The painting is in good condition. The paint exhibits a heavy craquelure pattern, which has tented slightly, and minute losses are found at the intersections of the cracks. The paint is somewhat abraded in the shadows of the sitter's hair and his hat, as well as his proper left thumb. Inpainting occurs in the sitter's hair, in the curtain along the sitter's proper left shoulder, and along the edges. The painting has not been treated since its acquisition.

[1] Infrared reflectography was performed using a Santa Barbara Focalplane InSb camera fitted with a K astronomy filter.

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## PROVENANCE

(Jacques Goudstikker, Amsterdam), before 1917. Dr. Walter von Pannwitz [1856-1920], Berlin, by 1917;[1] by inheritance to his wife, Catalina von Pannwitz [1876-1959, née Roth], Heemstede; by descent in the Pannwitz family; (Otto Nauman, Ltd., New York); purchased 1988 by Mr. and Mrs. Michal Hornstein, Montreal; (sale, Sotheby's, New York, 30 January 1998, no. 69); purchased through (Bob P. Haboldt & Co., New York) by NGA.

[1] The Pannwitz family lent the painting to the Mauritshuis, The Hague, from 1917 to 1923. Walter von Pannwitz was a Munich lawyer who, with his second wife Catalina Roth, relocated to Berlin in 1910. He acquired an extensive collection of paintings and applied arts in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

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## EXHIBITION HISTORY

1917 Loan to display with permanent collection, Mauritshuis, The Hague, 1917-1923.

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*Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century*

2000 *Art for the Nation: Collecting for a New Century*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2000-2001, unnumbered catalogue, repro.

2000 *Face to Face in the Mauritshuis*, Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen Mauritshuis, The Hague, 2000, no cat.

2007 *Dutch Portraits: The Age of Rembrandt and Frans Hals*, The National Gallery, London; Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague, 2007-2008, no. 64, repro.

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- 2004 Hand, John Oliver. *National Gallery of Art: Master Paintings from the Collection*. Washington and New York, 2004: 212-213, no. 170, color repro.
- 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.

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2008 Buvelot, Quentin. "El retrato holandés." *Numen* 2 (2008): 14, 25, repro.

2009 Ekkart, Rudolf E.O.. *Johannes Verspronck and the Girl in Blue*.  
Amsterdam, 2009: 20, 22, 58, color fig. 14.

2012 Tummers, Anna. *The Eye of the Connoisseur: Authenticating Paintings  
by Rembrandt and His Contemporaries*. Amsterdam, 2012: 244, 245,  
color fig. 154.

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