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Large Group Portraits of the Dutch Golden Age Celebrate Civic Pride at the National Gallery of Art, Washington March 10, 2012, through March 11, 2017



Govert Flinck, Dutch (1615 – 1660)

The Governors of the Kloveniersdoelen, 1642

oil on canvas

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam,

on loan from the City of Amsterdam

Washington, DC—The civic pride of the Dutch Golden Age will be celebrated in a special installation of two large-scale group portraits, on loan from Amsterdam to the National Gallery of Art, Washington. On view March 10, 2012, through March 11, 2017, in the Seventh Street Lobby of the West Building, ***Civic Pride: Group Portraits from Amsterdam*** will provide an extraordinary opportunity for visitors to enjoy a type of Dutch painting rarely seen outside the Netherlands. In these imposing works, two of Amsterdam's most important portraitists from the mid-17th century, Govert Flinck (1615–1660) and Bartholomeus van der Helst (1613–1670), have immortalized the civic pride of the men who governed the Kloveniersdoelen, the building where one of Amsterdam's three militia companies held its meetings.

"These group portraits offer a remarkable visual record of the inner workings of the Dutch Republic at the height of its presence on the global stage in the 17th century," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "It was through the efforts of the citizens depicted, and the civic organizations they represented, that the young republic achieved its economic, political, and artistic golden age. We are not only grateful to the Rijksmuseum and Amsterdam Museum for lending these masterpieces to the Gallery for a period of five years, but also to the city of Amsterdam, which owns the works, for agreeing to this generous loan."

Organization and Support

Civic Pride: Group Portraits from Amsterdam was organized by the National Gallery of Art.

The exhibition is made possible by the Hata Foundation.

This program is also supported, in part, by public funds from the Netherlands Cultural Services and through the generosity of Mrs. Henry H. Weldon.

The Installation

The two works, both titled *Governors of the Kloveniersdoelen*, were painted 13 years apart. Flinck (in 1642) and Van der Helst (in 1655) created comparable yet distinct interpretations of the shared sense of duty and personal interactions of two different generations of governors. The attire and demeanor of the governors varies from painting to painting, reflecting the different decades in which the men were portrayed. The two canvases are on long-term loan from the Rijksmuseum and the Amsterdam Museum, respectively.

The gentlemen depicted in the paintings belonged to Amsterdam's elite: most were members of the city council, and three of them eventually served as burgomaster (mayor) of Amsterdam. The building the governors administered, the Kloveniersdoelen, was used not only for gatherings of guardsmen, but was also rented out for official receptions and festive dinners hosted by the mayors and the city council, and it served as a public tavern. As the governors shared in the profits from the events held there, a

governorship was a lucrative and sought-after post.

A new type of portraiture appeared in the northern Netherlands in the 17th century: large group portraits depicting the leadership of professional and civic organizations. Guild administrators, government officials, board members of charitable institutions, and officers of militia companies commissioned distinguished artists to create these large-scale group portraits, destined for the walls of the organizations' headquarters. The portraits often depict the sitters in the midst of a meeting or a meal, emphasizing the members' shared responsibilities, personal interactions, and civic-mindedness.

Flinck and Van der Helst were two of the most renowned portraitists of their time. Flinck had trained under Rembrandt, and like his famous teacher, specialized in both history paintings and fashionable portraiture. Van der Helst was famous for the elegant realism of his portraits and was a favorite artist of the Amsterdam militia companies. His version of *Governors of the Kloveniersdoelen* (1655) has just undergone a complete restoration for the occasion of the exhibition. The results are dramatic, as the painting now has a brilliance of color that was obscured by old varnish for many years.

Although hundreds of group portraits were painted during the 17th century, they are rarely seen outside the Netherlands; many still remain with the organizations that originally commissioned them.

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit www.nga.gov/renovation (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

Press Office

National Gallery of Art

2000B South Club Drive

Landover, MD 20785

phone: (202) 842-6353 e-mail: pressinfo@nga.gov

Deborah Ziska

Chief of Press and Public Information

(202) 842-6353

ds-ziska@nga.gov