Alois Riegl

The Group Portraiture of Holland

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Introduction by Wolfgang Kemp
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Texts & Documents

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Introduction
Wolfgang Kemp

A uthors can be a real obstacle to the just appraisal of their own texts —
as, for instance, when they die immediately after finishing a work that
marks a break with their previous output. In such cases, there is a real danger
that the final opus will be cut down to the measure of the earlier work, espe-
cially when the author's active career has been brief. It needs to be borne in
mind that the entire published oeuvre of Alois Riegl belongs to the short
period between 1891 and 1903. Just compare the career of Julius von Schlosser,
another celebrated representative of the First Viennese School: Schlosser's
dissertation appeared in 1889, and the last work published in his lifetime
came out in 1937. Riegl, by contrast, died in 1905 at the age of forty-seven.
His last major publication was *The Group Portraiture of Holland* (*Das hol-
ländische Gruppenporträt*), first published as an article in the *Jahrbuch der
Kunstsammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, 205 folio pages long. It
came out in book form in 1931, and it has been neither republished nor trans-
lated since. In it, Riegl accomplishes the transition from ornament to argu-
ment (as he once put it), from patterns to human images. He puts formalism
behind him and practices, without fuss, without grandiose statements of
intent, and without hedging, a method of analysis that qualifies as a contri-
bution to the theory of communication, to the aesthetics of reception, and to
historical psychology.

This effort reaped no recognition when it was first published; later it was
belittled and misrepresented, partly in a deliberate effort to maintain the
purity of the genealogical record. Riegl's predestined heirs and successors
were the members of the Second Viennese School, practitioners of a formalism
enriched by structural analysis; they took some interest in the laws of com-
position but none in the motif, the psychological material that holds the
elements of a structure together. (Here Otto Pächt is an exception: his early
articles embody a firm declaration of allegiance to Riegl.) The Warburg school,
which emerged at the same time, might well have been receptive to such terms
as *body language* and *expressive gesture*. But its approach was (and is) under-
developed in terms of pictorial theory. It has no conception of the essential,
constitutive role played by the viewers as subjects, or by images that arrange
themselves and open up to be viewed. As a result, the author of a recent arti-
cle on *The Group Portraiture of Holland* was able to comment that, in it,
Riegl "defined the basic stylistic law for the art of Holland," namely, that of

"the coordinating linear composition: in Hollandish art the parts of the image are united by the principle of coordination, in contrast to the principle of subordination that prevails in the arts of the Romance peoples, whereby the pictorial structure can mostly be described in terms of variations on the triangular or pyramidal composition."[1]

If this were all, or even the main point, it would not be worth anyone's while to translate, or to write about, this nearly one-hundred-year-old treatise. In fact, it is a founding document of an intellectual tendency that has grown in importance as the twentieth century has advanced. This has entered the history of art and literature under the name of *Rezeptionsästhetik,* or aesthetics of reception, and it is from this standpoint that *The Group Portraiture of Holland* has been rediscovered since the early 1980s. The most recent comprehensive study of Riegl to be published in English, Margaret Iversen's *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory* (1993), bridged the gap between Riegl's work and present-day art history by stressing a common concern with the viewer and with the structures of the gaze. Margaret Olin, author of the monograph *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art* (1992), arrived at a similar conclusion along a different route: by reconstructing Riegl's "ethics of attention," which she described as a leitmotiv running through the art and the art history of our century.

Part I: "The Group Portraiture of Holland" in Its Time

Histories of the Eye

In an age of poststructuralist analyses that concentrate on the topic of the "gaze," it is certainly not out of place to recall the progression that took place within Riegl's work as he explored alternative versions of the "history of the eye" (*Augengeschichte,* to use the apt formulation of his great rival, Heinrich Wölfflin, who, like Riegl, regarded the history of seeing as "the most elementary duty of art history"). As a leading figure in the First Viennese School of art history (along with Franz Wickhoff, Julius von Schlosser, and Max Dvořák), Riegl began by concerning himself mainly with the history of nonfigurative formal entities, such as ornament and abstract architectural sculpture. This was entirely in keeping with the nineteenth-century positivist maxim that the creative energies and motives of an age, of a style, or of a nation are accessible not through major works of art but through the productions of an unconscious, automatic creativity. Like Wölfflin, Riegl was writing an "art history without names"; like him, Riegl believed that the discipline of art history could find a firm, autonomous foundation to build on only by concentrating on the "pure" data of form and disregarding such "distractions" as use, context of making, and the personality or intentions of the artist.

What Riegl had to offer was a clean break with a number of traditional criteria. The first to go was the canon of art-historical "periods": Riegl is the historian of transitional periods and anticlassical styles. Then came the break with the pursuit of beauty—an issue that left him nonplussed, as he disarm-

ingly confessed: "The question 'What is Beautiful?' becomes harder and harder to answer. Everything that exists is beautiful, or at least everything that is colored."[2] Then he jettisoned the supposed need for art to imitate. His study of ornament enabled him to show that the creation of ornament owed far more to the inner imperatives of the design process than to traditions of symbolism or to the imitation of nature.

It was this last realization that led Riegl to formulate his leading concept and explanatory principle. He wrote in an article in 1901: "Art does not evolve with reference to the objects of nature as such, since these have always remained the same, but to the way in which people wanted to see the objects of nature reproduced."[3]

Artistic volition (*Kunstwollen,* literally "art-will") is not — as is often fallaciously supposed — a creative instinct that slumbers in the obscure depths of nations and times: it operates by schooling and gratifying the eye, and it constitutes the "visual regime" of an age. In Riegl's words, "All human volition is directed toward achieving a satisfactory relationship with the world.... The shaping, artistic volition regulates man's relationship with the palpable, sensible manifestation of things. It is the expression of the specific way in which man wants things to be shaped or colored."[4]

This artistic volition does not enjoy total creative freedom in its choice of expressive forms. The "aesthetic urge" is channeled into a prestructured system of taxonomy. In this connection, Hans Sedlmayr has accurately spoken of Riegl's "doctrine of the potential directions of artistic volition,"[5] whereby the statement may be optical or haptic, farsighted or nearsighted, isolating or bonding, subjective or objective, idealistic or naturalistic, crystalline or organic, space or demarcation — the list could be continued. These sets of precisely defined "optical possibilities" (Wölfflin) apply to all art forms, genres, styles, materials, and so on.

Such is the Riegl whom we find in his books *Stilfragen* (Questions of style, 1893) and *Die spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (Late Roman art industry, 1901). We must therefore examine how he subsequently came to pursue the history of meaning in art, in terms no longer (only) of the history of perception but also and above all of the history of communication. We must also explore what happened when he turned away from the anonymous "art" of the artisan and from the abstract formulations of architecture, which manifest "the governing laws of artistic volition in often near-mathematical purity," and chose to discuss the art of painting, in which "these laws do not appear in total, pristine clarity."[6]

All this, said Riegl, arises "from 'content': that is, the ideas, poetic, religious, didactic, patriotic or whatever, which attach to the human figures... and distract the viewer... from what is essentially pictorial and artistic in the pictorial work of art: that is, the phenomenal manifestation of things as form and color in the plane or in space."[7]

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Reorientation: "The Magic Date of the Turn of the Century" (Musil)

The belief that "almost all of Riegl's ideas were present very early, and basically from the moment when he started work,"[8] was still very much alive in 1986, when Dietrich von Loh wrote the following: "In reading Riegl's works, I have the ... impression that the scholarship and the execution are all of a piece, from the *Altorientalische Teppiche* (Early Oriental carpets) of 1891 to his last articles."[9] Even without having read Riegl, anyone versed in the intellectual history of his time would surely find such an assertion hard to swallow. For the period on either side of 1900 is a classic instance of an age of upheaval, in which most fields of science and scholarship were subject to major revision—not least in Austria. Remember the celebrated passage in Robert Musil's *Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (Man without qualities), 1930–1943:

> After the oily-smooth mental calm of the two last decades of the nineteenth century, an exhilarating fever had arisen in Europe. No one knew for sure what was happening; no one could say for sure whether it was to be a New Art, a New Man, a New Morality, or perhaps a rearrangement of the social order. Everyone accordingly said that it was what suited him. But on all sides people were rising up to wage war on the status quo. Suddenly, on every hand, the right man was in the right place—and, most importantly, practical men of initiative met with those whose initiative resided on the intellectual plane.[10]

The philosopher and essayist Rudolf Kassner, who studied literary history and aesthetics at Vienna University from 1892 onward, probably attended Riegl's classes. In his memoirs he has much to say of those last years of the nineteenth century as a time of transition and succession, both in intellectual history and in the psychology of society at large. "The 1890s were the last period when people still dared to separate the content and the form of a work of literature, and to accept the work as the substrate of a conceptual structure—all of which can be traced back to the great liberal paradox of Faith and Knowledge."[11]

As described by Kassner, Riegl's contemporaries in the literary disciplines concerned themselves with only two tasks: the definition and comparative study of content and the investigation of influences. Riegl's own concerns exemplified an opposite and equally unbalanced extreme: the contemplation of form and the autonomous evolutionary history of art. In both fields, the important thing was to look for positive facts, things that were knowable and demonstrable. The Austrian writer Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach had already raised her voice in protest against this, with her marvelous epigram: "They understand very little, who understand only what can be explained."[12]

The happy medium in all this—for which read the new synthesis—is described by Kassner as follows: "What the 1890s stood for, among other things, was ... the very gradual transition from the strictly scholarly, scien-

tific, causal method to an interpretation couched in terms of intellectual history."[13] Kassner forbears — at this point, at least — to explain what he means by this; as an illustration, he need only cite his own collected works.

We can apply the "intellectual history" label to the later Riegl on the strength of *The Group Portraiture of Holland,* the work in which he comes closest to assuming the lofty mission of interpretation; in it, he opens the way to a hermeneutic approach by introducing the function of the viewer. A further relevant element, though one that is little developed in *The Group Portraiture of Holland,* is that of the history of influence and effect (*Wirkungsgeschichte*), which Riegl discussed in a contemporaneous essay on the modern cult of monuments ("Der moderne Denkmalkultus").

Kassner notes another and even further-reaching change — which he mentions, interestingly enough, in the sentence that follows his memories of student years: "The nineties of the last century ... were the decade ... of that individualism on which today's world, its youth above all, has turned its back."[14] In the context of Riegl's development, it is tempting to think of the concurrent crisis in the work of another compatriot. In 1901 Hugo von Hofmannsthal published his *Brief des Lord Chandos* (Letter from Lord Chandos), a work that documents a profound artistic crisis. Riegl and Hofmannsthal had little in common, either in their starting and finishing positions or in what they wrote in between; but there are analogies in their choice of a direction in which to seek the new. Hofmannsthal turned his back on aestheticism and on the concomitant art form of lyric poetry, and took up "popular" and expressive forms such as drama, storytelling, and oratory. Riegl, for his part, opened up his teaching and his writing to new topics, notably that of the human image, and assigned a constitutive role in his theory of art to external factors, namely, history and the observer.

He also assumed important public functions. In 1902 he became the editor of the *Hauptorgan für Denkmalpflege,* Austria's leading conservation journal, and in 1903 he took on the exalted and influential position of chief conservator of monuments in the Austrian Crown Lands. His contemporaries were surprised to see how this "silent, lonesome man, already half cut off from the world through deafness, who had lived until then far from daily life and strife, absorbed in his ideas and research, suddenly became a glowing, tireless organizer."[15]

None of this fully accounts for the methodological shift that now took place in Riegl's work. In addition to a generalized desire for a change, we may surmise that two fundamentally very simple motives were at work.

A systematic study of ornaments, which represent only themselves, is very different from a systematic study of representations of human beings. Ornaments, unlike people, are not belittled if we declare the "appearance of things as form and color in the plane or in space" to be "the true element of pictorial art in the work," or if we dismiss as "inauthentic" and "impure" the expressive possibilities of an art form whose "contents" are linked with ideas, whether poetic, religious, didactic, patriotic, or whatever.[16] Riegl now kept

the promise of an idea that had come to him earlier, when, seduced by assonance, he reduced the dichotomy of decorative and representational art to the formula of "ornament and argument."[17] If representational art is argument, then the work needs an interlocutor; and this must be a receptive organ other than the eye, which is equipped merely to deal with differences of form and color.

Another motive — external, perhaps, but certainly important — was that, as a university teacher, Riegl was working with themes different from, and more generalized than, those that he would have encountered in his work as curator at the Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie (Austrian museum for art and industry). Working within an institution that still revered philosophy as the Mother of Studies, *mater studiorum*, and teaching a subject that addressed a wider public beyond the few students who chose to major in it, Riegl felt it incumbent on himself to deal with such fundamental topics as a "historical grammar of the visual arts" (*Historische Grammatik der bildenden Künste*), 1897–1898.

Otto Pächt and Karl Swoboda have argued that this expansion of Riegl's thematic range took place in two stages. Until 1897, as an instructor and as an associate professor (*extraordinarius*), Riegl confined himself to a comparatively small number of topics, although he went beyond the confines of his museum studies. Upon achieving the status of full professor (*ordinarius*), he felt free to cover the whole spectrum of art history and also its methodology — a step marked, according to Pächt and Swoboda, by a change in the color of his manuscript paper.[18] Here we must bear in mind that Riegl's evolution during the 1890s did not take a consistent, single course but moved along parallel, not to say contradictory, lines. He transcended his own naturalism and formalism in three ways: firstly, by carrying them onward to new heights, as in *Die spätrömische Kunstindustrie*, a commissioned work, undertaken in 1897 and published in 1901; secondly, by replacing them with a universal, historical view, as in the posthumously published lecture course *Historische Grammatik der bildenden Künste*; and thirdly, by replacing them with a view geared to the aesthetics of reception, as in *The Group Portraiture of Holland*.

Austrian Formalism

The foundation of Riegl's work — one that remained unshaken until 1897 — was formalism. It would be hard to enunciate its creed more concisely than in the remarks quoted above from *Die spätrömische Kunstindustrie*. His statement on "the true element of pictorial art in the work" is an expression of Austrian Herbartianism, a theoretical tradition that dismissed Hegel's aesthetics as "aesthetics of content" and declined to respond to any question whatever about content, or about the relationships between content and form or between art and history.[19]

Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841) never wrote a systematic treatise on aesthetics, but his works embody all the fundamental assumptions of his

theory. These were elaborated by his pupils, and principally by Riegl's teacher, Robert Zimmermann (1824–1898), whose *Ästhetik,* published in two volumes in 1858–1860, is the major work produced by the school. After a period as a professor in Prague, Zimmermann moved to Vienna to occupy (from 1861 until 1896) the principal professorial chair of the Danubian Monarchy — that is, Austria's major chair of philosophy. Even if Riegl had never studied under Zimmermann, his ideas would still have to be seen in the context of Herbartianism; for, against stiff competition from late idealism, from materialism, and from scientifically oriented epistemological systems, the adherents of this system had succeeded in establishing it as "Austria's philosophy, pure and simple." They did this not only by occupying strategically important chairs of philosophy but above all through their deep-seated influence on educational methods: the training of teachers, the building of curricula in accordance with Herbartian formalist principles, and the teaching of psychology in institutions of higher education. Like every other Austrian, Riegl was thus a Herbartian before he ever went to university, let alone started to think for himself on scholarly issues.

For Herbart, that which is — "the real" — is not in itself knowable; he thinks of it as free from time, space, or change. Our cognitive ability can discern only an "objective semblance." To do so, it employs the "method of relations" — a formula that makes us prick up our ears in the context of Riegl. With admirable concision, the early twentieth-century historian of philosophy Wilhelm Windelband summed up the Herbartian doctrine as follows: "What we normally call a property of a thing is really only its relation to some other thing. Thus, 'white' is a property of a body only in relation to the light that it reflects; 'hard' is the relation of a body to another body that seeks to enter the space that it presently occupies; and so on. All properties define relations."[20]

The metaphysical root of formalist aesthetics lies in this construction, whereby "all that is perceived is the semblance of relationships among a multiplicity of in themselves unknowable entities."[21] The object that such aesthetics seeks to know is, traditionally, beauty: which means that its task is "to indicate the relationships" that generate aesthetic pleasure in the "apprehending subject." Aesthetics, according to Zimmermann, is "a theory of proportion on a grand scale."[22] From an "aesthetic viewpoint," the content of artistic creations is "entirely immaterial."[23] Form is not the expression of anything: it is a self-referential effect. The only things that count are lines, forms, colors, and the relationships between them.

For Zimmermann, the bodily forms of the Belvedere Apollo belong "to the family of single, double, and multiple curved surfaces; some are spherical, others ellipsoidal, others paraboloid, hyperboloid, or circular segmental surfaces, and so on: each form pleasing in itself and all harmoniously related to each other."[24] This extreme brand of formalism leads Zimmermann to downgrade the principle of imitation, which was, of course, very much to the fore in the age of realism: "Aesthetically — that is, from the viewpoint of

the imitation of an original—truth to nature has no advantage over untruth to nature."[25]

Zimmermann thus undermines the claim of art to truth, an idea that idealist philosophers of art, down to their very last representatives, such as Friedrich Theodor Vischer, had sought to salvage. Vischer, in his controversy with the disciples of Herbart, defined beauty as "truth in visible form."[26] They, for their part, declined to seek beauty in the agreement between idea and sensory phenomenon: that is, in a material criterion. Beauty of semblance is neither good, nor true, nor religious. "It is the apparition of itself, and it gives pleasure by virtue of its own forms."[27]

An aesthetics that founds the cognition of beauty on a mere "correlation" (*Zusammen*)—on the relationships and interactions among formal elements— is not hard to recognize as the underlying system of Riegl's ideas. In *The Group Portraiture of Holland,* as in his earlier work, he explores this togeth- erness and builds his investigation on such "relative concepts" as "subordina- tion" and "coordination."

Where do the differences lie? It can be said that the concluding part, and indeed the very last words, of *Die spätrömische Kunstindustrie* defines the framework in which Riegl situated his entire project. They refer to the law of motion to which, from the viewpoint of "universal history," the art and the worldview of the West are subject: that of evolution from an isolating to a relating form of representation. The model of this process is the transition from antiquity to late antiquity, which set the course of the evolution of art from then until Riegl's own time. The process recapitulates itself on a smaller scale within each age: the formal principles that are important (for whatever reason) to a specific period style are replaced or transformed in the course of moving toward the goal or telos of Western art. I quote the last lines of the final footnote of *Kunstindustrie:*

> The closest parallel to the evolutionary process adumbrated here, at least in its first two
> stages, emerges from a review of the history of the fine arts since Charlemagne. In the
> Middle Ages, the effort was to isolate objects (in space, whereas in antiquity it was in
> the plane), to establish an objective norm for their (three-dimensional) appearance, and
> to tie them as closely as possible to religious worship. . . . In subsequent times, by con-
> trast, the effort has been made to connect objects together in space (whether by means
> of line, as in the sixteenth century, or by means of light, as in the seventeenth, or by
> means of local coloring, as in modern art), to reproduce their subjective appear-
> ance, and to break free of religious worship, which gives way to philosophy and
> science (as the disciplines that proclaim the natural connections between things).[28]

A still better description of the coming project is the following capital state- ment from the concluding chapter:

> The change in the late antique worldview was a necessary phase of transition for
> the human mind from the notion of a connectedness among things that is in the

narrower sense purely mechanical and sequential — a connectedness that is, as it were, projected onto the plane — to that of a connectedness that is universal and chemical and reaches out through space in all directions.[29]

If Riegl had gone on with the pure brand of formalism expressed in these passages, he might have treated his new theme of group portraiture in terms of such definitions as the following, supplied by his three principal rivals in the field of formalist aesthetics and art history:

Adolf Hildebrand (1893): "Artistically, a group does not depend on a connection that arises from the action; it should appear as a connected whole that asserts itself as an ideal spatial unity in contrast to real space."[30]

Heinrich Wölfflin (1899): "The classical style attains its unity by giving the parts their autonomy as free members, and the Baroque style abandons the equal autonomy of the parts in favor of a more unified overall motif. In the former, there is coordination of the accents; in the latter, subordination."[31]

August Schmarsow (1905): "As customarily defined, [the group] is a number of individual living beings that stand in some relation to each other. It therefore presupposes that those beings are active, and that their activity is directed toward each other. . . . But for the visualization of space this internal connection does not really hold good."[32]

What counts, in aesthetic terms, is thus the phenomenal cohesion ("appearance as a connected whole") and not the internal cohesion, or purpose, that unites the members of a group. "For formalism, composition is everything,"[33] as Vischer remarked in the course of his controversy with the disciples of Herbart. He then went on to point out that the pursuit of aesthetically satisfying rules of composition could be used to justify any arrangement whatsoever: "Group toads of different species into a configuration . . . and that is beautiful. According to this principle, simple sequences of forms and colors that stand for nothing would also be beautiful, so long as harmony prevailed in their mutual relationships."[34] (If Vischer had only known!)

Aesthetics of Content as the History of Composition

By such standards, Riegl has already moved a long way toward an aesthetics of content when he says that the image of social groupings articulates decisive issues within the society of Holland in the age when it was most powerfully endangered: "It follows that the histories of corporate organizations and of group portraiture in democratic Holland were intimately connected, and that their fortunes went hand in hand."[35]

But there is more to this than a shift toward an aesthetics of content. Such an approach was not by any means new, nor had it been forgotten. Before formalism, and in the wake of Herder and Romanticism, philosophers of art and historians of culture had attached overriding importance to the position of art within the mental economy of nations. Here it is worth recalling the ideas of Karl Schnaase, whose *Niederländische Briefe* (Letters from the

Netherlands), 1834, are an important example of early Hegelian art-historical writing. Schnaase sets out to establish, in parallel to the positivist, documentary history of art, an approach that would investigate "those points where art and life are in contact." He goes on: "Art is the central activity of nations, in which all their aspirations and emotions, spiritual, moral, and material, most intimately touch and border on each other. In itself, it therefore provides us with the means of measuring and defining the direction and strength of those individual forces."[36]

Schnaase goes beyond these Hegelian premises to define art not only as the manifestation and reflection of the great defining factors of culture but as a phenomenon both active and acted upon within the overall context of an epoch. In the *Niederländische Briefe* he writes, "Art defines the rest of human existence as much as it is defined by it."[37] He is additionally prepared to believe that art forms undergo an autonomous evolution that does not necessarily coincide with developments elsewhere. I cite Schnaase not arbitrarily but because I can well imagine that Riegl's realignment was partly influenced by this author, whose history of art (*Geschichte der bildenden Künste*, 1843–1861) remained one of the principal works of synthesis in the field as late as the turn of the century.

As Michael Podro has pointed out, it was Schnaase who discovered the history of composition as a medium for the history of expression. According to Schnaase, for example (and here we might be reading Riegl), forms in the art of antiquity

> remain isolated, scarcely attending to each other, shown mostly in profile or frontally. Groups, when they are concerned with a mere external action, are often arranged with extreme elegance and delicacy.... But we never find a group in the spiritual sense which makes manifest to us through position, bearing and form their relation to each other, the reciprocity of speech and feeling, the inner bonds of intimate relationship through which the individual isolation is overcome, and shows the whole as forming the spiritual character of a family, a community between members and a unity with their environment.[38]

On the basis of these observations, and the very similar results that emerged from his comparisons between the relevant architectural styles, Schnaase has no difficulty in reaching further conclusions as to the nature of the pagan-antique and Christian cultures:

> The parts possess, instead of a direct value in themselves, an indirect or dependent value; now they do not have their effect, as in earlier times, outwardly and in the sense of broad articulated planes, but inwardly, through their interconnection in the spiritual unity of perspective lines. The basic principles of the Christian form of life are therefore given in art; the individual arts tend towards painting, in which even individual things are no longer solid and set one beside another, but serve a higher unity.[39]

The Relation to the Beholder

It must be said that it was still a long way from this generalized, analogical treatment of pictorial relationships to Riegl and his minute, close-up analytical method. Not only was the distance great, but at a given point principles had to be clarified: "Unlike Schnaase, Riegl develops concepts of pictorial coherence quite unanticipated by Schnaase—concepts which register differences between overall effect and detailed attention, between degrees and types of the beholder's involvement."[40]

This introduces the additional, and indeed catalytic, element in Riegl's "method of relations": the "beholder's involvement," the recognition of which marks the first appearance of an aesthetics of reception in Riegl's thinking or indeed anywhere in art history. Not that Herbartian psychological aesthetics entirely neglects the subjective pole. Since this is a system in which no absolute is conceivable, the "apprehending subject"[41] has a central function: in contemplating art, the subjective consciousness manufactures its own "psychic artwork," a mental construct, by tracing the relationships within the work and the concomitant sensations of pleasure or displeasure. However, this Herbartian interpretation suffers from the notorious weaknesses that beset all aesthetics of perception or feeling. As an aesthetics of *perception* it is not attuned to the crucial role of the dialogue between work and viewer; and as an *aesthetics* of perception it has no way of grasping that dialogue as a historical phenomenon and as a factor in any evolutionary history of art.

Riegl sets out his new program succinctly in an undated fragment, which Olin assigns to the context of his quest for fundamentals, that is, between 1897 and 1899:

> Aesthetics. Relation of parts to the whole. Relation of parts among themselves. Has not taken the relation to the beholder into consideration. The relation to the beholder constitutes *art history*. Its general principles make up historical aesthetics.[42]

To define the relations of the parts to the whole and to each other was the declared objective of Herbart, of Zimmermann, and (if I may call him so) of Riegl I. Art history on the basis of the "relation to the beholder" was first practiced by Riegl II, the author of *The Group Portraiture of Holland*. There is no such thing as "historical aesthetics" in Kant, in Herbart, or in Zimmermann. The last-named had declared in his *Aesthetics* that aesthetics dealt with an object that had "no history."[43] The term *historical aesthetics* sounds very like Hegel, a thinker whose star did not exactly shine brightly in the philosophical firmament of 1900. Zimmermann had accused him of relativism, saying that in Hegel's system anything with a "historical birth certificate" was entitled to a "place in the legislature of beauty" on the strength of its relative justification as the "expression of a particular stage in this process." Formulated before 1860, Zimmermann's warning against the "transformation of aesthetics into art history"[44] was an acute anticipatory criticism of aesthetic

historicism — and notably of the form of art history that his own pupil, Riegl (then two years old) was to establish: the Riegl whom we honor for having acknowledged that all genres and all periods of art history enjoy an equal right to our attention.

This "edict of tolerance" on the part of modern art history was promulgated within the borders of a formalistic view of art. The only additional ingredient required had been the concept and the veneration of progress: once given that, the stamp of necessity and logic could be set on everything that had ever evolved. It was a way to come closer to Hegel, but it was not the way to stumble on the laws of a historical aesthetics, which — and this is surely the point — revolves around the viewer-artwork relationship. Nevertheless, Hegel was the right port of call, and Riegl was the first thinker to build a postformalist system on him, albeit without explicitly referring to him. The cautious and sporadic return to Hegel that took place at the turn of the century, in the face of the oppressive hegemony of neo-Kantianism and vitalism, is a phenomenon that still calls for investigation. I shall mention only that, for example, Richard Hamann concludes his pioneer study *Der Impressionismus in Leben und Kunst* (Impressionism in life and in art), 1907, with the words: "Voices have also been raised on behalf of a yearning for the time that is to come. They sound, if we are not much mistaken, like 'More Hegel!'"[45]

On the function of the work in relation to the viewer, we read in Hegel's *Aesthetics:* "However much it may constitute a coherent and rounded world in itself, the work of art as a real, isolated object is not *for itself* but *for us*, for a public that looks at and enjoys it."[46] Hegel relates these two functions, *for itself* and *for us*, in a way that betrays unmistakable traces of normative classicism: "Both, the tranquil self-sufficiency and the address to the viewer, must of course be present in the work of art, but the two sides must maintain the most perfect equilibrium."[47]

Having laid down this principle, Hegel takes a third step, in which historical and systematic thinking are intimately intertwined. He has defined a norm, but he does not simply dismiss all deviations from that norm as bad art: he acknowledges them as historically inevitable articulations of successive stylistic phases. At one point he speaks of a (however motivated) "evolution [of art] in the direction of existing for the sake of others" — which is a special case of artistic volition. He thus explicitly acknowledges the historicity of the work-viewer relationship and introduces an evolutionary idea. Whereas the "austere" style of the early antique exists "for itself" and remains closed to the viewer, the "ideal" style of the classical epoch opens up "for us," in such a way that its acknowledgment of our presence seems like a gift, an effect of superabundance, rather than an effort to allure and captivate us. The succeeding phase is that of the "ingratiating" style, in which "the desire to please, the outward effect," becomes an end in itself and a "concern" in its own right. Devices and items are introduced that are less closely tied to the object. The state of "most perfect" equilibrium is thereby lost. Art no longer lives in its own right but through its external relations.

Riegl takes this system and fillets out its normative stiffening, treating the relationships defined by Hegel as value-free expressions of "artistic volition." In this he is a man of his time—as he is when, under the influence of ethno-psychology and cultural geography (which few contemporary scholars escaped) he postulates the existence not only of historical but also of national stylistic constants. The latter make it possible for identical problems to be solved in entirely different ways within the same period.

Adopting a conceptual approach not far removed from Hegel's distinction between art "for itself" and art "for us," Riegl speaks of "internal coherence" and "external coherence"—by which he means, in contrast to Hegel, not two functions of one and the same work but two inherently different types of work. The meaning of Riegl's terms is best clarified by a passage in which the specific qualities of Flemish and Hollandish genre painting are illustrated by the work of Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Pieter Aertsen, respectively:

> The figures in Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding* and *Peasant Dance* in the Court Museum in Vienna either directly interact with each other or, when broken down into groups, are treated in a way that still leads us to believe unconditionally in their spontaneous coexistence. The various episodes that make up Aertsen's *Egg Dance* in the Rijksmuseum, on the other hand, seem almost completely unrelated to each other. Whereas one of Bruegel's main concerns—and in this respect he was no different from Italian artists—was for the action to establish internal coherence (that is, of action), Aertsen to a great extent leaves it to the subjective viewer to impose (external) coherence on the figures' actions. Consequently, the figures in Aertsen's genre paintings are isolated psychologically from each other, and thus demand a direct connection with the viewer; this is the same situation already observed... which we recognized as the earliest basis for group portraiture in Holland.[48]

Riegl's criterion of "internal coherence" thus demands absolute reciprocity, the involvement of all the characters in a single action, and a unified formal treatment of the connecting psychological and physical functions of the figures. The result is an uncompromising composition that builds no bridges to the viewer: the painting appears complete in itself. In contrast to this approach, which Riegl finds to be native to Italian and Flemish artists above all, there is the art that creates an "external coherence," by coordinating the figures instead of subordinating them, and by making them stand together in a more or less unconnected way: a form of painting that later manifests its dependence on the viewer even more clearly by having the figures relate directly to him or her by means of eye contact, gesture, and movement. For Riegl, the phenotype of this tendency is the group portraiture of Holland.

Riegl constructs its history in terms of the three evolutionary stages of a history of the art-viewer relationship. The starting point and direction of movement are indicated by the evolving tendency in the art of Holland, as described, to base its pictorial design on "external coherence" and "coordination." We might expect to find the bond between work and viewer

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becoming closer and closer in the course of a century and a half; it comes as something of a surprise, perhaps, to find that Riegl sees this closer bond as arising from the progressive adoption, by the artists of Holland, of the devices of "internal coherence."

Riegl refers to the first segment of the history of the group portrait (1529–1566) as the "symbolic" period. In this period, relatively speaking, the coherence of the image is "external," that is, it is created by the viewer. To show that the figures belong together, the artist uses meaningful objects and gestures (insignia, weapons, and articles of devotion) rather than any spatial connection or scenic action.

The work of the second or "genre" period (1580–1624) seeks "to combine composition based on rows with a more spatial arrangement, as well as to combine a symbolic conception with a momentary, subjective expressiveness by means of livelier physical movements."[49] As interpreted by Riegl, the relativization of time and place indicates a growth of subjectivity; it gives the characters greater opportunities to motivate their presence together and the purpose of their association.

The third period (1624–1662) completes this evolutionary process. In the major works of this period, the "external" and "internal" coherence coincide. More than ever, space and time act as integrating elements: the presentation, previously defined by rigid rows, comes so close to a momentary snapshot that it will always be a moot point whether Rembrandt's *Night Watch* is a group portrait or a history painting. The moment unites the figures in the image and simultaneously makes the image into the viewer's image. "Internal coherence" is created not so much by interlocked motifs of action as through the adroit and sensitive directorial control of eye contact.

This — for all its departure from the ideal of "external coherence" — is the element in this evolutionary process that is typical of Holland. The unity of the image is transferred from the objective and physical sphere into the subjective and psychic sphere: it appeals to the viewer's "consciousness of subjective experience." The gazes of those portrayed no longer meet that of the viewer, as they did in the earlier period; instead, the viewer is enabled to identify with them. The viewer's mental representation of the "attentiveness" conveyed with convincing mastery in the picture ensures that the picture captures and captivates just as completely as before. Indeed, the viewer's participation is enhanced to the degree in which he or she is not only addressed but also involved.

In *The Group Portraiture of Holland,* as I have said, Riegl expands this artistic and perceptual interpretation by including an ethnopsychological constant: the character of Holland or the North, as opposed to Italy or the Romance countries. The precise nature of the options involved in these ideal and generalized assumptions as to the nature of national mentalities need not concern us at present. The main question is how artistic evolution can be

made to coexist with ethnopsychology. One principle that is unimpaired by the ethnic idea is that of the instinctual and supraindividual nature of the evolution of art. When Riegl's narrative takes him into the painting of an age marked by great artistic personalities, he has no intention of delegating the notion of driving or directing forces to the individual artists. He is clear about this in relation to Rembrandt and the treatment of his group portraits by earlier writers:

> Almost all the authors concerned, however, have taken Rembrandt's personal artistic development — and modern standards of taste — as the starting point of their investigations. Our strategy is quite different: we intend to examine Rembrandt's three group portraits as links in the larger chain of an evolution that began with Jan van Scorel and Dirk Jacobsz., and which continued on to include the great painters of the mid–seventeenth century. Seeing how closely his earliest solution to the problem of the group portrait is still related to the works of his immediate predecessors, and how systematically he continued to deal with the same problem in his later paintings, will convince us that even Rembrandt was essentially the agent of the artistic volition of his nation and times, albeit an agent of genius, and at times of consummate achievement. This is why we will be looking at these three paintings not from the personal point of view of Rembrandt as an artist trying to solve particular problems but as examples of the problem-solving process common to artists working throughout Holland.[50]

This is one of those points in the course of this work at which Riegl aligns himself with Hegel and his school, and above all with Schnaase and his *Niederländische Briefe* of 1834. Schnaase makes it perfectly clear that the internal coherence and evolutionary logic of art history do not reside in the artist of genius but in the impersonal spirit of a national culture: "The greatness of the individual consists rather in his ability to grasp the spirit of his nation, act in accordance with it, bring to fruition what is undeveloped in it."[51]

Seen from this perspective, the group portraiture of Holland offers an exceptionally promising field of investigation, since few other artistic genres or subcategories within genres permit us to trace such an unbroken "sequence" through the crucial phases of the history of a national school of art — and also since the subject matter of the whole artistic enterprise consists in the Hollanders themselves.

Attentiveness: "A Volatile Concept"

Here we see Riegl abruptly opening up a methodological perspective destined to bring about the "emancipation of the Third Estate" (Hans Robert Jauss) — in other words, the acknowledgment of the function of the viewer. Nor is this all: at the same time, we see him discovering the ethical dimension that is the nub of his conception. According to Riegl's more or less homespun anthropology, there are three modes to the relationship between the human being and the world: will (*Wille*), emotion (*Gefühl*), and attention/attentiveness

(*Aufmerksamkeit*). These three attitudes progress sequentially, as does the evolution of art, along a continuum that leads from objective to subjective; and—here is his personal emphasis—the three are also classified as values. "Selfless attention" corresponds not only to "Holland's original artistic ideal"[52] but to Riegl's own ideal of intercourse between the individual on one hand and art, nature, and other people on the other. "Clearly," writes Olin, "Riegl thought attentiveness, and all it entailed, not only an effective way to unify a picture, but an admirable way to lead one's life, in concord with one's fellow man. It meant respect (or regard), democracy, equality."[53]

Ultimately, the art of Holland, the "painting of attention," comes so close to this ideal because it makes this concept of attention an integral component of the viewer-work relationship: "Art does not depict a relationship in this drama, but rather performs it with the beholder."[54]

As always with Riegl, scientific *and* artistic currents in the mind of the age combine to furnish him with a key concept. The high value placed on attentiveness has much to do with international late Impressionism, which is what Riegl always has in mind when he refers to Impressionism or to contemporary art in general.

French Impressionism as such has a different agenda, at least in regard to figure composition and scenic structure. The work of Degas and above all of Manet is actually marked above all by the indifference, inattention, heedlessness, and disparity of interest that characterize the juxtaposition of the figures. Riegl's concept of "external coherence" is hard to accommodate here, since the viewer is not so much required to supply what is missing as to acknowledge that it *is* missing, and to live with the dissonance inherent in the situation. "Isolation is the key," as Werner Hofmann concludes in an analysis of Manet that operates within Riegl's criteria.[55]

Late Impressionism—literary as well as pictorial—is an attempt to do the precise opposite. Forms are dissolved in order to create that overriding context of form, color, and light toward which, in Riegl's view, the evolution of Western art is necessarily heading. And in this continuum the artist embeds figures whose psychic and physical functions operate connectively, as Riegl would say, by drawing the viewer's attention to the attentiveness that they manifest. Of this I shall give two examples.

The Naturalist painter Émile Friant takes attentiveness as his theme, both in the narrower sense of taking heed and in the wider sense of paying attention: "respect" or "regard." His painting *All Saints' Day,* dated 1888 (fig. 1), shows the following: Attentiveness is the small change of our social and psychic intercourse with others and with the world, but it also creates a link that bridges the widest gaps. It bridges the gap between life and death: the living have dressed themselves in black to honor the dead, whose abode they approach resolutely, not to say hastily. It bridges the gap between rich and poor, which here equates with the difference between sickness and health. The child is about to give a coin to the disabled veteran. It also bridges the gap between generations: the child's gesture is closely observed by the two women

Fig. 1. Émile Friant. French, 1863–1932
All Saints' Day, 1888, oil on canvas, 254 × 334 cm
Nancy, Musée des Beaux-Arts, inv. 1399

behind. This stands out because the procession of black-clad visitants hastens on its way purposefully, as if for fear of missing something, so that we expect everyone to be either passing by heedlessly or at best making some conventional, offhand gesture of beneficence.

In this work, Friant is instrumentalizing the Impressionist program. He uses modern life, with its heedless haste and its disintegrating social cohesion, as a background against which to set a touching episode that takes place, appropriately, on the feast of All Saints' Day. He captures his theme narratively: in terms of Olin's distinction, we might say that Friant "*depicts* a relationship" marked by attentiveness. This work is not, of course, a group portrait, but Riegl might nevertheless have cited it as an instance of typically French dramatization. It is a miniature drama of attentiveness, performed for the benefit of a man who neither sees nor reacts, and who is the viewer's counterpart.

Fritz von Uhde's painting *The Artist's Daughters in the Garden,* 1901 (fig. 2), painted one year before the publication of *The Group Portraiture of Holland,* corresponds to Riegl's notion of Northern or Nordic art, as the art that looks to nature above all for its underlying unity. This is the atmospheric unity to which Riegl applies the hackneyed contemporary term, *Stimmung* (mood). Mood can indicate its subjects' inner involvement even if they give no bodily expression of their impulses of will. Above all, what counts here is that the image "*performs*" the quality in question "with the beholder." Uhde deliberately cuts down the content of his painting: his own daughters and his own dog in his own garden. Not very much happens; and what does happen is conveyed only through its effect on the two principal characters: the youngest daughter and the dog. Something outside the picture has attracted their attention. The scene is only half there. The rest, the gap, is for the viewer to fill.

The daughter has moved from one state of attentiveness to another: from reading to expectant looking. Uhde has captured this by purely painterly means: the light reflected from the pages of the book casts a seemingly supernatural glow on the young woman's face. Apropos of another contemporary artist, Jozef Israëls, one of the Dutch Impressionists, Riegl remarked with some asperity that "Israëls and his disciples see the world as nothing but reflections (the thing does not exist in its own right but solely as a colored reflection of adjacent things)."[56] The same applies to Uhde. Everything in his painting is a reflection, both in the sense of a reflex of light and in that of a psychophysiological reaction. But this is a humanistic Impressionism: at this one decisive point, he breaks away from the key Impressionist principle of contingency and relativity ("colored reflection of adjacent objects"). By establishing a connection between book and face, he introduces a dialectic that has to do with illumination and enlightenment, wanting-to-know and knowledge. At the same time, he emphasizes the thematic intention that underlies the painting. Whether she were reading or looking up, in either case the image of the artist's daughter would remain an image of attentiveness, thus involving

Fig. 2. Fritz von Uhde. German, 1848–1911
The Artist's Daughters in the Garden, 1901,
oil on canvas, 137 × 151.5 cm
Frankfurt am Main, Städelsches Kunstinstitut und
Städtische Galerie, inv. SG 81

the viewer and conveying that he or she can have a function even in the absence of any great quantity of what Riegl would call "contents."

At the same time, however, the ephemeral nature of attentiveness becomes evident. A moment ago, the principal figure was occupied in reading; now she looks up; in a moment, she will go back to her book or stand up and greet the person who is now the object of her attention. The transience of the sensory and mental force of attentiveness, here advanced to the status of the principal theme of the work, brings us to the significance of the theme of attentiveness in terms of intellectual history.

Here we must imagine the situation created by psychophysics, the fashionable scientific trend of the second half of the nineteenth century. With its elementarist and experimental approach, psychophysics had shattered the psychological certainties of idealistic philosophy: Kant's a priori transcendentalism along with Hegel's totalitarian concept of mind. The psychophysicists presented the human being as a bundle of more or less cooperating faculties, the number of which grew year after year, and as a "low-voltage nerve system," whose input and output could now for the first time be measured. The measurement and sorting of reactions kept many researchers busy, and the numbers of publications, professorial chairs, and institutes expanded mightily. There remained one great unanswered question: where was the synthesis, the central organ that could provide something like an identity of consciousness or at least some "reality maintenance"? Ernst Mach, professor of psychology at Vienna University from 1895 onward, took an uncompromising line: "Nothing can save the ego," was his last word on the matter. He had earlier remarked that "the ego is of no more than *relative* consistency."[57]

Mach's great rival, Wilhelm Wundt, who strongly influenced Riegl's ideas on ethnopsychology, believed that he could give a positive answer to the same question. In Wundt's schematic presentation of the human mind, it is attention that occupies the central position, to which data from the senses and from other mental faculties flow. Having once postulated the necessity of this unified function, Wundt set out to prove its biological existence, and duly claimed to have localized it in the frontal cerebral lobes. The central faculty of "attention," discovered by Wundt, has its place in the long list of magnificent makeshift categories in which the history of science abounds: soul, ether, phlogiston, and the rest. In every case, the problematic, if not impossible, existential status of the object concerned is a constituent part of the hypothesis.

Attention is thus a "volatile concept," to use Jonathan Crary's term:

> Attention always contained within itself the conditions for its own disintegration; it was haunted by the possibility of its own excess — which we all know so well whenever we try to look at any one thing for too long. . . . Attention and distraction were not two essentially different states but existed on a single continuum, and thus attention was . . . a dynamic process, intensifying and diminishing, rising and falling, ebbing and flowing, according to an indeterminate set of variables.[58]

And so it transpired that the concept that was supposed to stabilize relationships within the human mental economy was itself in crisis: part of the problem rather than its solution.

Riegl, says Olin, "feared that modern man had lost contact with the external facts of the world and with his fellow man. Riegl sought not only to arouse interest in painters of the past who respected the role of art in facilitating human communication, but, at a deeper level, to address the problem at the heart of modern man's excessive subjectivity."[59] In his own immediate surroundings, Riegl could see how even the art of late Impressionism — in which, yet again, the "excessive subjectivity" of modern man had its chance to try for a sympathetic response from the world — was heading straight back toward an "art of inattention."

In 1899 Gustav Klimt painted his *Schubert at the Piano* (fig. 3) for the salon of a Viennese amateur. Both the nature of the commission and the treatment of the theme entitle this work to be regarded as a continuation of the group portraits of Holland. Like them, it is entirely committed to an "ethics of attention." As Carl E. Schorske puts it, "The 'Schubert' panel represents *Hausmusik* [domestic music], music as the aesthetic crown of a social existence both ordered and secure. The whole is bathed in warm candlelight, which softens the outlines of the figures to blend them into social harmony."[60]

However, it must also be realized that this image of perfect concentration is built up entirely from subcenters of absorption: piano playing, singing, and listening. Each activity is treated separately. The strict axiality of the figures, in relation to the picture plane and to each other, clashes disturbingly with the implication of togetherness and joint concentration, which is ultimately maintained only through lighting and brushwork.

A short time after this was painted, Riegl himself had dealings with Klimt. The first of the ceiling paintings that Klimt was commissioned to provide for the great hall (*Aula*) of Vienna University was completed in 1900. The theme was *Philosophy*: an allegorical representation of the very faculty to which Riegl, as an art historian, belonged (fig. 4). The controversy that then broke out within the university and in the public at large is one of the better-known scandals of recent art history. We know that Riegl backed Klimt's supporters by writing a professional opinion, although it does seem that he adhered to the cause (far more energetically supported by his colleague Wickhoff) only after some hesitation.

Klimt's allegory must have interested — and indeed disturbed — Riegl in two respects: as the author of *Die spätrömische Kunstindustrie* and *The Group Portraiture of Holland*. In such a composition as this, art returns, after an interval of some five centuries, to a synthetic approach to pictorial structure, and to the conceptual image that first evolved in late antiquity and became standard in medieval art. This image is essentially composite. It combines elements that exist on differing scales, in differing modes of being, and in differing artistic forms — unlike the post-Renaissance image, every element
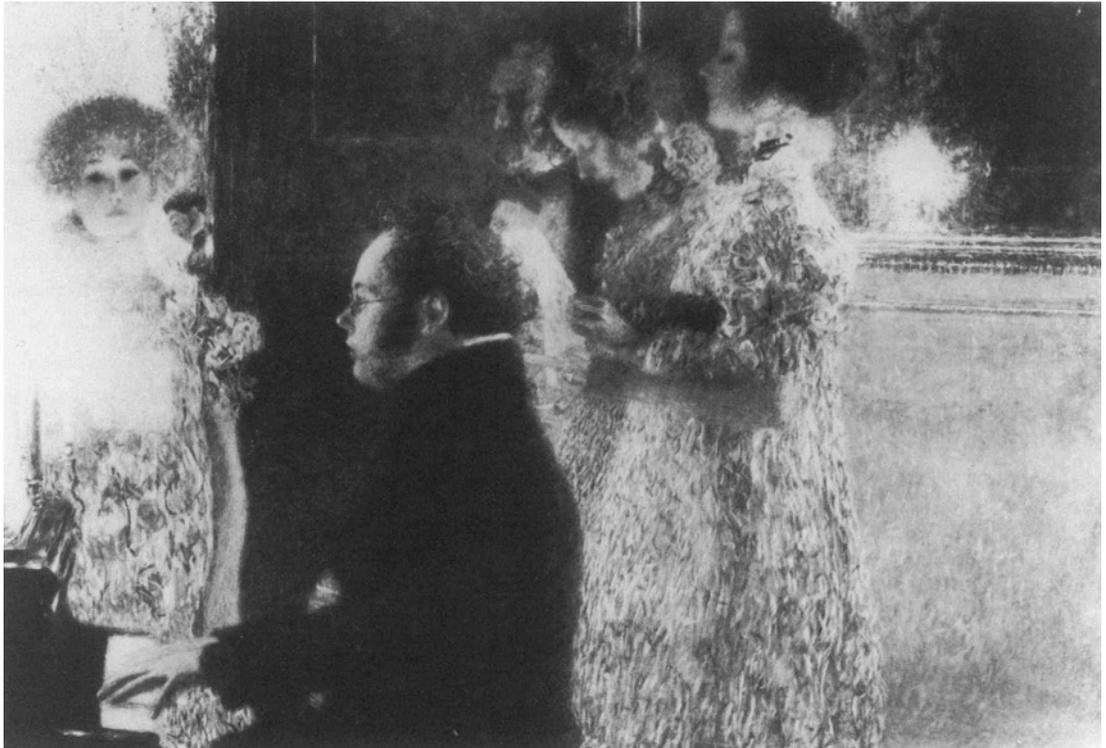
Fig. 3. Gustav Klimt. Austrian, 1862–1918
Schubert at the Piano, 1899,
oil on canvas, 137 × 200 cm
Destroyed 1945. Photograph: Galerie Welz, Salzburg

Fig. 4. Gustav Klimt. Austrian, 1862–1918
Philosophy, 1900,
ceiling panel for the auditorium of the University of Vienna,
oil on canvas, 430 × 300 cm
Destroyed 1945. Photograph: Galerie Welz, Salzburg

of which is subsumed into a single system of projection. The details of Klimt's painting were coordinated as follows:

> The tangled bodies of suffering mankind drift slowly by, suspended aimless in a viscous void. Out of a cosmic murk — the stars are far behind — a heavy, sleepy Sphinx looms all unseeing, herself but a condensation of atomized space. Only the face at the base of the picture suggests in its luminosity the existence of a conscious mind. *Das Wissen* [Knowledge], as the catalogue calls this figure, is placed in the rays of the footlights, like a prompter turned around, as though to cue us, the audience, into the cosmic drama.[61]

Indeed, "Knowledge" is the only manifestation of self-consciousness, concisely modeled by light and shade, in the whole tableau. We are surely not far wrong if we view this entity in conjunction with the representatives of attention in Friant's and Uhde's paintings. Its function is not to personify the collected, stratified Knowledge of humanity (that is, Wisdom): in accordance with the profound conviction of the age in which the work was painted, Knowledge is here characterized as Wanting-to-Know: a faculty dependent on attention and observation. It is not so very far from this to Uhde's daughter, looking up from her book.

But what is presented as the object of this Knowledge contrasts dramatically with the alertness of the face that we see above the "footlights." It is an order that exists autonomously. Internal coherence exists, as before, on the optical (or, as Schorske says, "atomized") level, but not on that of figurative composition: there is no action and reaction, no mutual perception or communication. The coherence of this group of human figures is an externally imposed, involuntary compulsion that condemns them to mindlessness. It is the total opposite of the ideal of voluntary association that Riegl saw realized in the group portraits of Holland, in which individuals join to pursue a collective end, without losing their independence, and in which attention is requited by attention.

Part II: "The Group Portraiture of Holland" Today

Riegl's study is now just under a century old. In many respects, it remains unrivaled, though research in specific areas has naturally advanced. This is not the place to refute, correct, complete, or continue the detail of Riegl's work. If he slips up over a date here or misidentifies the subject of a painting there, this has little impact on the interpretation as such. It is probably more helpful to view Riegl critically from the inside out: that is, to characterize the perspectives that were important to him and marked his break with formalism, both in their limitations and in their capacity for future development.

Four themes offer starting points for this.

The Marksmen's Guilds: Defense Force and Organ of Social Cohesion

Given the way things have evolved over the last thirty years, it is no wonder that Riegl has been most severely criticized for his enthusiastic (but underdocumented) espousal of an approach based on social history. Like Riegl, his critics take the corporate bodies of Dutch society as their starting point, but they see them in far less monolithic terms.

The marksmen's guilds, to take those first, changed greatly in organization, function, and self-image during the period that ran from the late Middle Ages to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. For instance, Christian Tümpel provides a historical explanation for a fact that Riegl explained teleologically, in terms of the evolution of an artistic genre.[62] I refer to the emergence of the earliest secular group portraits in the 1520s. As Riegl saw it, portraiture, including the portraiture of groups, came into its own by emancipating itself — together with its patrons, the corporations — from religious functions and thus was able to concentrate on its own essential business, that of representing persons and giving visual expression to a collective purpose. Tümpel accounts for this change in terms of a historical event of the first magnitude that in Riegl's view of Dutch history becomes operative only later: the Reformation. In an age of schism, it was conducive to domestic peace if all images with a public function — group portraits included — avoided any indication of specific religious allegiances. The thesis of the Reformation as a catalyst for a secular art and iconography has been examined from a number of angles in recent decades. According to Tümpel, it finds additional corroboration in the group portraiture of Holland.

In the same context, Riegl's naive belief in the fundamentally democratic character of northern European urban society and of its institutions, including the guilds, has often raised a smile. Before we can judge this, it will be necessary to consider what those corporations actually were, and what part they played within the organism of urban society. The information that follows, compiled by Bob Haak for a catalog published by the Amsterdams Historisch Museum, should be an aid to the better understanding of the problem in its quantitative aspects:

> Once Amsterdam had joined the rebellion against Philip II of Spain in 1578, it became necessary to strengthen the city's defenses. New companies of civilian guardsmen were formed to add to the existing marksmen's guilds. The old guilds and the new companies of guardsmen soon merged, under the traditional name of *schutterij,* or civic guard. Each district had one company (*compagnie*). Up to 1650 each company was divided into four corporalships (*korporaalschappen*), thereafter into three.
>
> In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the companies were organized in five regiments (*regimenten*), each with its own color — orange, yellow, blue, white, or green. The color of the sashes worn by the men in the portraits indicates the regiment to which their corporalship belongs.
>
> Initially, the regiments were commanded by the two colonels (*kolonels*), one for the Oude Zijde, the other for the Nieuwe Zijde (the parts of the city to the east and

west of the River Amstel), but later on the number of colonels in each regiment rose to five.

Each company was commanded by a captain (*kapitein*), assisted by his lieutenant (*luitenant*), and each company had its own ensign (*vaandrig*), who carried the flag. The corporalships were headed by sergeants (*sergeanten*).

As the city grew, so did the number of districts and with them the number of companies:

1580: 11 districts, 11 companies, 44 corporalships;
1613: 13 districts, 13 companies, 52 corporalships;
1620: 20 districts, 20 companies, 80 corporalships;
1650: 54 districts, 54 companies, 162 corporalships;
1672: 60 districts, 60 companies, 180 corporalships.

From then on the division remained largely unchanged until the end of the eighteenth century.

In 1672 the total number of guardsmen was estimated as roughly 10,000. In practice, however, there were only about 100 active guardsmen in each company, that is, about 30 in each corporalship. Colonels and captains together made up the membership of the court martial (*krijgsraad*), a disciplinary committee which was directly responsible to the city council. Guardsmen were sworn in by the court martial, which advised the city council concerning the appointment of new officers, or selected them itself.[63]

So much for numbers and organizational structures. As for the function of these corporations, it was their duty, in continuation of the medieval tradition of citizen defense forces, to defend the city against outside attack. To this end, they were assigned to specific portions of the city walls. The often sketchy accounts of their later history give the impression that they soon lost this important function, and that even by the seventeenth century they functioned only as traditional associations, more concerned with conviviality than with military duty. The fact that the state of the Netherlands maintained a standing army for its own defense seems to confirm these suppositions. However, the truth is much more complicated.

The fact is that in the Netherlands-Spanish war of the 1570s the citizen militias played a considerable part in the defense of the country, and that in 1579 there was even some consideration of making military service compulsory for all able-bodied citizens. In the 1580s Justus Lipsius, the country's great constitutionalist, called for a standing army composed not of mercenaries but of native Dutchmen, along with a large and constantly trained reserve. This shows that the politico-military principle of the defense of the realm by native-born forces was already envisaged as a possibility. The organizational consequences were not long in appearing. In 1578 the marksmen's guilds of Amsterdam were replaced by civic guards. Though Riegl gives no dates, his summary of the consequences of this reorganization is concrete and correct:

[T]he military purpose of these civic guards, which remained a serious one until after the signing of the Peace of Westphalia, necessarily called for a higher degree of subordination. The immediate effect on group portraiture is that we are never again left in doubt about who the commanding officer is. From now on, the captain, the lieutenant, and the standard-bearer are the three ranks that are almost always represented as clearly as one could wish.[64]

The defense of the realm was not yet entirely in the hands of its citizens. The state of the Netherlands was rich enough to maintain a professional army. The military high command, which reported directly to the stadtholder, took the surely justified view that a successful defense of the country would require offensive, field, and siege operations, for which the city militia — being organized for defense and not always readily available — was entirely unsuited. And so the importance of the latter in national military policy diminished. It is, however, important to remember that the citizen companies were now organized on the same lines as the professional army and that the standards and structures of the military world now began to find their way into bourgeois life. This corroborates Riegl's central point. A society that enjoys the luxury of being a historical exception — relying as it does on collegiality instead of sovereignty, coordination instead of subordination, corporate instead of monarchic prestige — raises questions of organization and representation on every level of society. These issues affect relationships between the citizen and the civic and military authorities, between the city and the province, between the province and the provinces, and between the stadtholder and the provinces.

Soldiering was only one of the several functions of the citizen militias; and it is a theme of their group portraits only in an indirect sense. We do not see them engaged in defending their city or their country; at most, they are making preparations to do so and presenting themselves in a state of general combat readiness. In Werner van den Valckert's portrait of *Thirteen Guardsmen of the Voetboogsdoelen under their Captain Albert Conraetsz. Burcht* (see Riegl's fig. 41), one group of guardsmen busy themselves with a map and a book, while another member of the company holds Jacob de Gheyn's celebrated military manual, *Wappenhandelinghe* (1608). If we take into account the message of the map, which shows the sector of the city that this company was required to defend, then on a symbolic level at least the painting provides a coherent statement of the group's military mission and its rationale.[65]

Straightforward formulations of this kind are rare, however. In most cases, the occasion that brings the guardsmen together — where indicated at all — is a festive rather than a warlike one. Does this tendency in the group portraits corroborate the view that the companies soon changed into traditional associations and men's clubs, less concerned with the defense of their country than with shooting matches, parades, feasts, and drinking bouts (this last being a reproach incurred by civic guard companies ever since Carolingian times)? Such a view is based on too narrow a view of the function of the group; it

overlooks its activity within the society, which was highly compatible with its primary role as a militia. On the function of the marksmen's guilds in internal politics, the historian J. L. Price writes:

> The problem of the maintenance of public order was always very present in the seventeenth century, and the Holland regents had only very limited means at their disposal to meet the threat of such disturbances. The police system was rudimentary and was ineffective against serious outbreaks of popular violence; military help from the provincial government could take days to arrive. Thus, in practice the town magistracies were forced to rely on the civic guards, the town militias, to put down riots and to protect life and property. Service in the militia (the *schutterij*) was a duty imposed on all citizens with sufficient money to pay for their equipment — in consequence it was chiefly composed of men ... [who] were very susceptible to influence and pressure from their peers, and so the attitudes displayed by the *schutterij* normally reflected those of wide sections of the town population. In ordinary circumstances they would obey their officers, who were in most towns regents, but at times of crisis they were perfectly capable of taking an independent line.[66]

The captains of the companies were nominated by the court martial and appointed by the civic authorities; they sat on the board of regents, the supreme administrative authority in each city. In the militias, the rulers met with the ruled: men from upwardly or downwardly mobile sections of urban society, and the rank-and-file guardsmen who represented the artisan and small-shopkeeper classes. This social structure should not be visualized as a static thing, a definitive image of a corporate society. Not only were the militias a social laboratory, designed to produce a social product — loyalty — in case of crisis: they were also a forum in which the upper classes, as currently constituted, were on display and were required to acquit themselves well.

Among the peculiarities of the political history of the Dutch cities in the seventeenth century — in addition to the fact, just mentioned, that the regents' right to rule was under constant scrutiny — is the fact that the regents' composition was by no means homogeneous and consistent. Social, religious, economic, and political factors, together with specific rules of recruitment, combined to ensure that at the heart of the government (although unchecked by democracy) there was a considerable turnover. Representatives, new and old, needed to assert their legitimacy, advertise themselves, and communicate politically. The militias functioned as organs of political integration, in which these major or minor shifts of power were communicated to those who were affected but not directly involved. Whatever the ulterior motives behind them, ceremonial events — shooting displays, processions, banquets — were appropriate occasions for the establishment of a sense of community:

> However much social and individual differentiation there may have been on these occasions, the equally powerful sense of collective incorporation into an urban brotherhood was expressed by the flamboyant display in which all members (and

sometimes even the servants, who were occasionally included in the group por-
traits) participated.[67]

In this context it is worth mentioning that the practice of sitting for group
portraits did not extend to the supreme governing bodies within the cities, or
to the burgomasters. Significantly, group portraiture found a home only at the
interface between rulers and ruled, between upper and lower classes of soci-
ety, where the encounter was institutionalized and ritualized.

Riegl was certainly mistaken when he supposed the group portraits to be
expressive of a northern European notion of equality, however motivated.
The portraits show only a small number of the highly placed and affluent
members of a company. He was absolutely right, however, when he sought to
place issues of pictorial organization in a social and political context and
assigned national significance to interpersonal relations. He instinctively
grasped that in seventeenth-century Holland the positions adopted and struc-
tures established within these paintings had to be communicated as a task of
great urgency, a task that the viewer was left to verify.

Riegl's Limitations of Place and Time

The simplest thing, naturally, is to criticize Riegl in Riegl's own terms. In an
age that saw itself as late and decadent, his whole effort was directed toward
abolishing the idea of decline. In an artistic period that invested its principal
energies in the decorative arts, or in the pursuit of a synthesis of all the arts,
he sought to enhance the prestige of past art through its minor genres — of
which, of course, the group portrait was one. As a purely occasional art form,
it had attracted little interest before Riegl, except perhaps among local his-
torians; to this day, it has little appeal to the public at large. Riegl expected
the modern viewer to find these works "dull" or "jarring." It is, of course,
especially interesting to observe how this historian of continuities and regular
evolutionary processes deals with the evolution of such a form. Riegl, remem-
ber, was the historian who had boldly declared, in *Die spätrömische Kunstin-
dustrie,* that the history of art consisted of "progress, nothing but progress,"
and that "in history there is in fact no such thing" as "decline."[68]

On occasion, this approach inhibits Riegl in detecting factors of continu-
ity. For example, he has no time to spare for developments in the neighboring
regions of the Southern (Catholic) Netherlands and of northern France, where
the patron groups — and therefore the paintings themselves — retained all their
religious affinities. It would be possible to write a whole parallel treatise on
the Catholic south.[69] In Bruges, for example, the Claeissins dynasty of painters,
whose members successively held the office of city painter, supplied the corpo-
rations with group portraits in accordance with the formulas of the fifteenth
century (fig. 5). Which is not to say that no evolution took place in the south.
Leaving Rubens and van Dyck to one side, I shall cite one work that casts a
vivid spotlight on the effect of a different religious and political culture on the
treatment of an identical theme.

Fig. 5. Pieter Claeissins II. Flemish, active 1571–died 1623
The Corporation of Our Lady of the Withered Tree, 1620,
oil on panel, central panel: 115 × 150 cm; left and right panels: 120 × 67.5 cm
Bruges, Sainte-Walburga, inv. nos. B 17343–45

In 1656 the exiled King Charles II of England and his brothers paid a visit to the Sainte-Barbe guild of crossbowmen in Bruges, an event that was recorded in 1671 in two paintings by Jan Baptiste van Meunincxhove. One shows the banquet inside the guildhall; the other (fig. 6) shows the gathering on the grounds of the building, in which the king awards the prize to the victor in the shooting match, who is his brother, the duke of York. This is a composition in the style of Charles Le Brun, rather endearingly patchworked with Netherlandish ideas. I am thinking of the faithful depiction of the house and garden, which look rather like a backyard view that a Delft painter would have shown without any such exalted staffage figures; and of the scattered groups of guild members who are evidently highly conscious of their claim to be represented by a portrait. The king and his brothers were themselves members of the three Bruges guilds of Sainte-Barbe, Saint-Sébastien, and Saint-Georges; this fact alone shows how far these former civic self-defense organizations had evolved in the direction of pageantry and display.

Returning to the evolution in the Northern Netherlands, we read in Riegl's preface to *The Group Portraiture of Holland* that the group portrait genre flourished from the first half of the sixteenth century until 1648: "Then, steadily, a decline set in."[70] This statement comes as something of a surprise. It can be explained only in terms of a paradigm shift on Riegl's part, whereby he had come to accept the existence of "external factors" in addition to artistic volition. According to Riegl, the Peace of 1648 effectively marked the demise of the art form that for many decades had expressed the determination of the Dutch cities to defend themselves. Recent research confirms that a change took place, but points to other causes. In 1650, far from being disbanded, the Amsterdam companies increased in number from twenty to fifty-four. By that time, the walls of the guildhalls were crammed with group portraits in the life-size format first introduced in the 1580s. On grounds of space alone, it would have been impossible to honor the officers of all the new companies with equally impressive portraits. The last full-scale *schutterstuk* was painted in 1650. Thereafter the genre lived on only in the reduced form of portraits of the four officers of each company. Riegl describes this late sub-category of the genre without recognizing that it was a stopgap.

None of this means that group portraiture had died out as a genre, nor does it explain its "decline." The Peace of 1648 and other political events made little difference to the desire of syndics, regents, and regentesses to be immortalized in group portraits. Riegl is honest enough to admit that the catalog compiled by his predecessor Herman Riegel (no relation) actually lists more group portraits in the period after Rembrandt's *Staalmeesters* [*Syndics of the Drapers' Guild*], 1662 (see Riegl's fig. 54) than in the period before it. He nevertheless concludes that this work is the latest example since it represented "a high point in the evolution, after which no more profound problems or far-reaching solutions arose."[71]

For thus refusing to be impressed by quantity, Riegl has two slightly lame

Fig. 6. Jan Baptist van Meunincxhove. Flemish, active 1644–died 1703
Charles II in the Gardens of the Guild of Sainte-Barbe in Bruges, 1671,
oil on canvas, 199 × 249 cm
Bruges, Groeningemuseum, inv. no. 1378

explanations to offer: "it is difficult to imagine finding a public anywhere today willing to read the results of such a study, which promises to be long-winded."[72] This author, who has hitherto shown absolutely no aversion to long-windedness, or to the study of unknown artists and obscure periods of the art history of Holland, goes on to assert: "I also have a valid scholarly reason for not pursuing this topic, and that is because the pictorial conception of the group portraits of the later Academic period already resembles too closely that of the modern period (inartistic and primarily challenged by photography) which grows directly out of it."[73]

Thus set down without further comment, Riegl's "explanation" leaves us truly baffled. It comes from an art historian who had proclaimed a universal edict of tolerance, and who had spared no effort to present the aesthetics of his own age as the consequence of a long and logical evolution. Why this sudden, brusque dismissal of a whole age, and with it of another "minor art," that of photography, which in Vienna itself—as Riegl was in a position to know—had developed new aspirations as a technique of portraiture? And why this retreat on the part of an Austrian writer, at a time when observers far less well informed than himself could have told him of the major achievements of nineteenth-century Austrian portrait painting in particular?

To make our perplexity complete, Riegl broaches the topic of this "late period" by remarking that the reputation of the "Academic" phase of Dutch painting does not stand high with the public and that art historians have unresistingly followed suit, with the result that "there is scarcely any other period in the history of art about which we know and appreciate so little...as we do about painting in Holland in the last third of the seventeenth century."[74] This sounds like the old Riegl, who goes on to assure us that the time is "not far distant when we can begin to look at this period dispassionately"[75] and that the inner propulsive force of this stylistic phenomenon—as always, he adds—is "an inherently progressive one."[76]

Why, then, in this particular case, does Riegl deny himself the role of savior of a neglected period? Because—and this is the only explanation we can devise for his repudiation of a task that seemed cut out for him—because there are times when those who champion a "progressive" art just happen to be the wrong people. This is a crucial point. Whereas in his earlier writing (*Die spätrömische Kunstindustrie*) the laws of stylistic evolution indiscriminately transformed all the art forms of all peoples and all religions, the thesis of *The Group Portraiture of Holland* plants an immovable obstacle in the path of the tide of times: national character, or the specifically national artistic volition. The Hollanders, we read, were "basically well-meaning Northerners at peace with themselves and the world";[77] their nature was totally out of harmony with the tendency of the new art, which throve on "emotion in the form of pathos."[78] The French influence, above all, which became all-pervasive after 1660 and which favored a "dramatic interpretation,"[79] was at odds with everything that the art of Holland stood for. Riegl has a good word to say for Italian influence: this "always had a positive,

creative, and stimulating effect on art in Holland," whereas "the more closely related French influence had an immediate crippling effect, soon killing it off entirely."[80]

We are left in no doubt that Riegl here singles out a limited segment of an ongoing evolutionary process, and that he seeks to justify this action by interpreting a genre-based aesthetics in normative terms — normative, above all, in terms of ethnopsychology. This position prevents him from logically following through his inquiry into the social history of his subject. Anyone who treats 1648 as a turning point in art, as in history in general, must surely permit us to ask what sociological developments in Holland might have turned the absorption of French tendencies, in portraiture in particular, into something more than a matter of fashion.

Here I am mainly thinking of the fact that in the mid–seventeenth century the civic oligarchy, which for sixty or seventy years had been under constant pressure to redirect and reconstitute itself, finally succeeded in closing its ranks, installing a relatively stable system of appointments to public office, and turning itself into a civic aristocracy. The Radhuis (city hall) in Amsterdam, built in 1648–1665, is frequently cited as an expression of this change:

> The complex and careful imagery — renaissance-classical in its allusions — ... seems
> very much an alien element in the Dutch Republic, and it was a sign that the regents
> in architecture and the other visual arts as well as in literature were beginning to
> take their models from abroad and develop a separate and distinct élite culture very
> different from that of their fellow citizens. It is a little paradoxical that this build-
> ing which should have been the symbol of the greatness of Amsterdam, and by
> extension of the Republic, in fact shows almost nothing of the strength and indi-
> viduality of Dutch culture.[81]

Such observations should not, of course, deter further research. The encounter of French material culture (fashion, interior decor, architecture) and the French style in painting with Dutch genre conventions means that the later period of group portraiture in Holland is a topic of exceptional interest for an art history that specializes in processes of exchange and assimilation. The French or academic phase was not the end of the matter. The rebirth of the native idiom on native soil, and its elaboration within the framework of classicism, led to some remarkable results.

A pair of examples must suffice to illustrate these two trends. One is Cornelis Troost's well-known *Regents of the Almoners' Orphanage,* of 1729 (fig. 7), which intensifies and concentrates, to the point of caricature, all those elements that had entered the tradition and had hitherto been held in equilibrium. It takes an effort to remember that these are the trustees of an orphanage, not a council of state or the participants in a high-level diplomatic conference. Contrast Frans Decker's *Regents of the Groote Proveniershuis, Haarlem* (fig. 8), of 1737, a portrait entirely conceived in the spirit of the

Fig. 7. Cornelis Troost. Dutch, 1696–1750
Regents of the Almoners' Orphanage, Amsterdam, 1729,
oil on canvas, 414 × 417 cm
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-C-87

Fig. 8. Frans Decker. Dutch, 1684–1751
Regents of the Groote Proveniershuis, Haarlem, 1737,
oil on canvas, 166 × 221 cm
Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum, inv. no. os I-63
Photo: Tom Haartsen

native, "democratic" tradition, in which classicism has a subduing rather than an aggrandizing influence: only the curtain looks like a stray remnant of Baroque stagecraft.

Sheila D. Muller has drawn attention to an interesting trick in this latter painting, which serves to underscore the significance of locality — a point neglected by Riegl. She writes:

> There is no forceful address to the viewer by the regents in Decker's work, but rather a good-natured acknowledgment in which there is also acceptance of the distractions caused by the setting and its cleverly conceived features. The most engaging of these is the glimpse of sky and treetop, visible through an open door on the right, which seems to invite the viewer to "match" these details with the view of the institution presented in a painting on the wall behind the regents. A match would mean having located the position of the boardroom on the frontal view of the institution provided in the painting. In this way the viewer is involved in seeing for himself the regents situated within their institution, an idea which reinforces their being represented here with the formal attributes of the Active Life.[82]

The Neglect of Locality

Although Riegl was well aware of the change in the function of the guilds, and was able to interpret its consequences in terms of the history of composition, the specific functions served by the *schutterstukken* and *regentenstukken* themselves and their local relevance after 1580 were of no interest to him. This indifference on his part is a defining characteristic of formalism, often described as a method that grew and flourished within museums and through the study of photographs.

The beginnings of the group portrait genre admittedly tend to make this kind of exclusiveness easier. The paintings were initially small, made no demands on their surroundings, and revealed little ability to deal with space as a category. Wherever sixteenth-century painters introduced spatial set pieces — stairs, galleries, balustrades — they devised them purely in order to marshal their numerous figures on multiple planes. The first sign of a reorientation appears in a group portrait that Riegl — almost criminally — fails to discuss. Jacob Lyon's *The Company of Captain Jacob Pietersz. Hooghkamer and Lieutenant Pieter Jacobsz. van Rijn*, 1628 (fig. 9), gives us a view of the guardroom. We might mistake this setting for a conventional backdrop, were it not for the painting on the back wall: a reduced but readily identifiable copy of Dirck Barendsz.'s *Crossbowmen of Squad G*, 1564 (see Riegl's fig. 23). The artist thus gives us a witty plunge into depth or *mise en abîme*. The captain of the later troop stands directly beneath the image of its predecessor, and a man in the upper row gestures toward him: a symbolic gesture that contemporary painters had long since abandoned in favor of alternative devices. At the same time, however, the guardsman's hand indicates the painting above Captain Hooghkamer's head — the very earliest "symbolic phase" portrait in which nobody points at the captain. We also notice the enormous difference in size

between the earlier and later *schutterstukken*: Barendsz.'s painting measures 143 × 183 cm, and Lyon's 254 × 477.5 cm.

Christian Tümpel has pointed out that this sudden increase in size, and the almost inflationary boom in life-size group portraits, went hand in hand with the refurbishment and enlargement of the guildhalls from 1623 onward.[83] Lyon's painting was intended for the *Zaal 't Stuck* of the refurbished Voetboogsdoelen (crossbowmen's guild), and we may assume that it expresses the guild's pride in its new quarters.

In a group portrait painted around 1630, Hendrik Pot makes the same point in a different way: he has the officers descend the front steps of the Kloveniersdoelen (musketeers' guild), on Gasthuisstraat in Haarlem. Above their heads, we look through a window into the great hall of the building, where we can see part of another, presumably earlier *schutterstuk*. The new painting integrates the old and at the same time distances it. Pot's officers leave their guildhall, and with it the image of the past that hangs within. This internal reworking of the group portrait tradition brings us to the question of its external relations. How do these paintings relate to their neighbors? The real spaces and new contextual relationships in which militia and regent group portraits appear, when they hang frame-to-frame in the banqueting halls of the guilds or in the boardrooms of the charitable foundations; the rivalry among companies for the "best picture" or the "best position"; the "correlation" that begins to look like an anticipation of the nineteenth-century Salon: this whole competitive context failed to interest Riegl, who mixed and matched his own photographs and slides in a different and much freer way. In his world, artists work as the agents of an immanent artistic purpose, a teleology of the genre: they are calibrated on a chronological, not a spatial, axis. And so the displacement of old pictures and the replacement of old formulations — processes of physical and conceptual suppression — are overlooked, as are the forms of traditionalism, the enduring or even retrograde tendencies, that emerge whenever institutions give themselves a public face.

All this would be a sine qua non for a history of the group portrait in terms of sequential development. But Riegl never acknowledged this as his task, because for him the governing laws of the process were established by "Dutchness" and by the criteria of the genre. That a sequence of works might develop a dynamic of its own is something that never occurred to him. As far as he was concerned, it was a dramatic and momentous step to have concentrated on a single historical subcategory of painting; he was convinced all along that artistic volition makes no distinction between genres and art forms and makes use of them all indiscriminately.

Descriptive versus Narrative
Posterity, Riegl tells us, has shown itself impressed by only a few examples of the group portrait genre. In his view, these examples are not typical of painting in Holland, and thus not typical group portraits at all, because they contain "a unifying action."[84] Rembrandt's *Night Watch* is the outstanding

Fig. 9. Jacob Lyon. Dutch, 1587–1648/59
The Company of Captain Jacob Pietersz. Hooghkamer and
Lieutenant Pieter Jacobsz. van Rijn, 1628,
oil on canvas, 254 × 477.5 cm
Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 998

Fig. 10. Master of the Mechelen Guild of Saint George.
Dutch, 16th century
Members of the Crossbowmen's Guild of Saint George,
ca. 1497, oil on panel, 105 × 174 cm
Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, inv. no. 818

instance of this. Riegl censures this focus on the action as such on two grounds: as an offense against the authentic Holland and as an offense against authentic portraiture. It is in the nature of Hollandish painting that it "contains almost no action. In other words, the Hollanders produced no history painting."[85] The essence of painting in Holland, for Riegl, is that it is "portraiture." Today, we might adopt Svetlana Alpers' formulation and speak of it as an "art of describing": one that seeks, in Riegl's words, the "complete suppression of any external action."[86] It is thus the ideal antithesis of Italian art, which Riegl defines as the art of willful confrontation.

Once this approach is adopted, it becomes clear not only that the late productions of the French-influenced, academic phase are beyond the pale but that individual works and whole tendencies within Riegl's own chosen field have to be left out or explained away. The earliest guild portraits probably took the form that we see in the painting of *Members of the Crossbowmen's Guild of Saint George*, circa 1497 (fig. 10): here, thirty-three guildsmen gather around an image of Saint George (depicted with the features of the duke of Burgundy, Philip the Handsome), who slays the dragon in an extensive landscape. Riegl was not acquainted with this particular work, though he postulated the existence of such a preliminary stage. He himself began the sequence with his celebrated discussion of *The Legend of John the Baptist* by Geertgen tot Sint Jans, in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (see Riegl's fig. 2), in which the donors, members of the Knights of Saint John, are arrayed as bystanders within a wider landscape and narrative context.

Riegl did not reflect on the function and evolutionary status of this painting. Scholars today surmise that it was the outside of an altarpiece shutter, and that those portrayed are a family group rather than a corporate body. Albert Châtelet has identified them as the members of the Schooten family, from which the commanders of the Knights of Saint John in Haarlem were traditionally drawn.[87] But this does not greatly change the situation defined by Riegl as the starting point of his history of the group portrait genre. Portraits, he says, first appeared as "little more than appendages to history paintings";[88] in other words, in their early, subordinate status he treats them with the impatience of the teleological thinker.

This attitude needs to be shaken off. Suppose that the blend of portrait and history painting was an established and popular genre in the second half of the fifteenth century, and one that did not survive—unlike the group portraits of militia companies and regents—because the corporations for which it was made did not last, and because its religious content made it liable to destruction in subsequent phases of iconoclasm. I would like to cite a further example of the same type, which makes it plain that the word *appendage* is an anachronistic distortion of the truth.

The Master of the Tiburtine Sibyl, in the painting now in Frankfurt that gives him his name, shows us the vision of the Madonna that appeared to the Emperor Augustus, thanks to the Sibyl, on the day of Christ's Nativity (fig. 11). This theophany takes place in public and in broad daylight—a

Fig. 11. Master of the Tiburtine Sibyl. Netherlandish, 15th century
The Vision of Augustus, ca. 1477, tempera on panel, 69 × 85 cm
Frankfurt am Main, Städelsches Kunstinstitut
und Städtische Galerie, inv. 1068

feature that becomes easier to understand if we reflect on the concerns of those who commissioned the work, who are presumably the five men in black robes and birettas on the left. According to James Snyder, these are professors at Louvain University. In 1473 and succeeding years, that university promoted the hotly contested doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary: "The Vision of Augustus offered the champions of this theological view an additional argument drawn from classical antiquity."[89] In the painting they commissioned, the professors are exhibiting, as it were, the historical evidence that clinches their case. It would be no easy matter to decide which of the two motifs, or of the two genres, is central and which subsidiary.

This kind of thing was not by any means a specialty of Holland: it was a widespread phenomenon in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. There is no need to labor the point: Ghirlandaio, Carpaccio, and Titian in Italy, and Bernd Notke in Germany, created analogous history paintings with accessory figures bearing portrait likenesses. In all those cases, too, the device was neither a makeshift nor a transition to something else.

An analogy may help here. The genre known as the *portrait historié,* so popular in Netherlandish art, demands to be interpreted as the result of a conscious decision to couch a portrait in the guise of a history painting. But it could never be fitted into Riegl's system except as an aberration, an inauthentic and provisional solution that makes sense only if we strip off the fancy dress. The category includes a number of group portraits: one example is Anthuenis Claessins's painting of the city fathers of Bruges assembled to enact a banquet of Ahasuerus (fig. 12). These sitters present themselves in the same convivial context as the guildsmen, except that they transpose it into the Old Testament. Their identities, and the nature of the occasion, are not known. However, it is plausible to suppose that the painting commemorates the nomination of the man who sits on the far bench next to the "king," and who is the only one to have removed his headgear.

My point here is this. If we accept the Reformation factor proposed by Tümpel, as against Riegl's teleological view, to account for the elimination of sacred personages and histories, then we can construct an alternative model of the history of group portraiture. According to this, narrative is no longer eliminated by the intrinsic dynamic of the art form but suppressed by external factors and compelled to find other outlets, which are summed up in such terms as *portrait historié,* "symbolism," and "elements of genre painting." Given the right conditions, it may reassert itself at any time. As we know, Riegl found those conditions to have been present in 1650 or thereabouts, and he dismissed them as the result of alien stylistic tendencies atypical of Holland.

A key work in this regard, for him, is Ferdinand Bol's group portrait of the *Regents of the Leper Hospital* in Amsterdam, 1649 (see Riegl's fig. 64). According to Riegl, Bol's innovation here—one that was to enjoy lasting success—is that the sitters are shown together with one of their clients. A servant presents a boy leper to the group of four regents, thus introducing an element

Fig. 12. Anthuenis Claeissins. Flemish, ca. 1536–1613
The Banquet of King Ahasuerus, 1574,
oil on oak panel, 130 × 155 cm
Bruges, Groeningemuseum, inv. no. 0.23

of interest from outside into the portrait. Neither Riegl's chronology nor his assessment of the phenomenon can be accepted today. By the third decade of the seventeenth century, if not before, the artists of Holland were using extraneous elements of this kind as a way to convey individual identity and group function and to maintain a dialogue between formality and informality in interpersonal communication. Those aims are, of course, far easier to attain when the work deals with burghers, or their families, in domestic settings. Even so, they soon spread to the painting of official groups.

My example here is one of the best — and in evolutionary terms one of the most important — examples of the group portrait genre: Jacob Adriaensz. Backer's *Regentesses of the Burgher Orphanage,* circa 1633–1634 (fig. 13). Painted for the regents' chamber of the orphanage in Amsterdam, where it still hangs, this large work (238 × 274 cm) shows four regentesses and a matron who brings in an orphan dressed in the black-and-red orphanage uniform. As will readily be appreciated, the presence of a child, probably unprecedented in such a composition, makes a considerable difference. "More than anything else," writes David Smith, "it is children who create the demand for narrative in Dutch portraiture and in Dutch realism in general. Where adults could be, and were, conceived in terms of fixed states of being, at least in formal, rhetorical portraits, children were increasingly seen as engaged in a process of becoming."[90]

Mutatis mutandis, the same goes for servants, male and female. The *binnenmoeder* (matron), as a subordinate person in charge, had already appeared in earlier group portraits. In this case, however, it is noteworthy that matron and child form the apex of the group composition and are positioned exactly on the golden section. The former factor is familiar from Rembrandt's work. In the painting that did more than any other to make his reputation, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp,* 1632 (see Riegl's fig. 48), painted one year earlier than Backer's picture, it is one of the seven doctors and not the anatomist himself who forms the apex of the triangular composition and subordinates all the other figures to himself. He does so, however, by different means. As the only figure who looks at the viewer, he points with his right hand to the operation that is going on below him; his function, as Riegl explains, is to create "external coherence."

Not so Backer's matron. By introducing a narrative element, her position and action serve to establish an internal coherence. Notice the open door in the background: it supplies an abbreviated formula for the boardroom in which the action takes place, and at the same time it is an indicator of action. Through it, the matron and the child have just entered to see the regentesses. This situates the painting within Holland's solid, long-established tradition of portraiture, and indeed of Hollandish painting in general, in which the interior is made to embrace "space outside," and with it the "larger, narrative realities."

This space outside may simply be "offstage," or it may be the external world as a whole, integrated into the painting — as first seen in the fifteenth-

Fig. 13. Jacob Adriaensz. Backer. Dutch, 1608–1651
The Regentesses of the Burgher Orphanage, ca. 1633/1634,
oil on canvas, 238 × 274 cm
Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum,
inv. no. B 4842

century use of windows and doors aligned with the axis of recession. Here I need only recall Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini portrait, with its mirror in which we see the painter and a companion entering through the chamber door. Beyond them, we see another room, and in that room a window. Van Eyck paints all this on the far wall of his interior, but the plunge into external infinity is theoretically located behind us, thus making us aware that the dimension of depth is limitless in both directions. What Smith has to say of "offstage" space is equally applicable to the glimpse of the outside world: "Insofar as it allows the frame of reference to expand beyond the constraints of the frame, one might say that the threshold-motif allows space to become time."[91]

At the same time as they activate our spatial imagination, the child and the matron illustrate the work of the regentesses and help, through their compositional positioning, to release those individuals from the rigors of standing on their dignity. Partly, at least. In this scene, three individuals turn to look at the viewer: reading from the left, these are the first, third, and fourth regentesses. Since the matron and child stand between regentesses 3 and 4, and concentrate their attention entirely on 1, 2, and 3, we are shown a regular alternation of representatives of external and internal unity. At the same time, we need to register the compositional parentheses that enclose the whole: at the two outer ends sit regentesses who address us and put us in our place with "stereo eyes." Again, two externally preoccupied regentesses frame the matron-child group, which vicariously represents the purpose of the meeting. The left-hand member of this pair performs a typically dual, if not triple, function: she points to the central pair and stretches out her other hand so far that it lies on the table directly in front of the child. At the same time, she looks in the direction of the viewer. By tilting her head and leaning toward her neighbors, she makes this gesture ambiguous. She is basically establishing two presences: that of the viewer and that of the other overseers.

It is quite logical that she perform this function, since she sits on the "sociable" side of the composition, while the lone regentess on the right seems both severe and isolated. She does not reach out toward the child but has picked up a pen, with which she might at any moment resume work on the ledger before her. These two women can thus be said to embody the two aspects of the work of a regentess: *caritas,* care, kindness, and solicitude on the left; *disciplina,* order, and thrift on the right. To see both aspects together, and to understand their effects on the institution and on those in its charge, is the responsibility that this composition places on the viewer.

Also related to our theme is the group of five paintings done by an unidentified painter, possibly Werner van den Valckert, for the Almoners' Office of the City of Amsterdam in 1626. Here, the relationship between clients and overseers has been reversed. Where both Backer and Bol introduce one child to epitomize the purpose for which the institution exists, in these paintings the poor take over. Visually, they fill the spaces of the municipal institution that has taken them in. Other exceptional features of these works — from Riegl's point of view — are their arrangement as a series and the didactic

Fig. 14. Werner Jacobsz. van den Valckert. Dutch, 1580/85–ca. 1627
The Enrollment of the Paupers and Orphans, 1626,
oil on panel, 153 × 216 cm
Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no.
A 3021

thoroughness with which they cover various aspects of the business of caring for the poor. Iconographically speaking, the pattern that emerges is that of the Acts of Compassion — as set forth, for instance, in a number of crowded panoramas by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Adapted to secular and institutional subject matter, this pattern was to enjoy a successful career in later painting. Hogarth comes close to it in a number of his paintings and engravings, notably when he is on his favorite topic: that of the conflicting nature of human impulses and their chaotic effects on social situations, even those nominally subject to institutional control. Later echoes can be picked up as far afield as Goya's crowd scenes, Courbet's *Artist in His Studio,* and Adolph Menzel's *Iron Rolling Mill.*

However, the Almoners' Office paintings remain commissioned group portraits. The almoners are easily identified by their dress, and, despite the diversity of their activities, most of them make direct eye contact with the viewer. Others turn to each other, across the heads of their charges, just like the sitters in countless other *regentenstukken.* One of the paintings, *The Enrollment of the Paupers and Orphans* (fig. 14), contains at a rough count forty distinct individuals; nevertheless, it would be possible to eliminate all the clients and leave a composition that would still work perfectly well as a *regentenstuk.*

The planned edition of Riegl's unpublished notes may show us which paintings were not accessible to him, and which ones he overlooked — not to say suppressed — in order to preserve the purity of his evolutionary logic and of the options open to the artistic volition of Holland. What deserves critical scrutiny, however, is not the nature of his choices so much as the extent of what remains possible within his conception.

Of course, an art that has committed itself to the task of portraiture — "describing" — remains at liberty to make contact with other genres and stylistic positions, and to make profitable use of narrative elements. At all events, it is interesting to see which *regentenstuk* — of those closest in chronology and in conception to the one by Backer, just discussed — Riegl chooses to single out as a trendsetter. It turns out to be *The Regents of the Leper Hospital* by Werner van den Valckert, 1624 (see Riegl's fig. 40), a group consisting of four regents and one servant or custodian. Unlike Backer's composition, it does not include a representative of the regents' charges (in this case, a leper). Or, to be precise, according to Riegl's interpretation of the painting the client is not omitted: his position is occupied by the viewer. The regents all look out at us, and their actions imply that they are engaged in admitting a new inmate.

In terms of the history of reception — though not in terms of the aesthetics of reception — this is a highly risky interpretation, though Riegl does not seem to be aware of this. He has succeeded in finding a case of total external coherence combined with powerful inner concentration. But the idea that the viewer is expected to identify with the sick, poor, and helpless outcast could be justified only if we were to suppose that the portrait was painted for the inmates of the institution. The evidence suggests nothing of the sort.

Militiamen and regents alike had these group portraits painted for the places where they officiated and feasted, and for the benefit of themselves and their peers. Very often, the work was commissioned to mark the retirement of one functionary by showing the group, for one last time, as a complete entity. The sitters' externally directed attentiveness was thus for the benefit of the newcomer, the successor to the retiring member; or else it was intended to convince an ideal, putative observer that those present meant business.

Notes

1. Dietrich von Loh, "Alois Riegl und die Hegelsche Geschichtsphilosophie," *Kunst-jahrbuch der Stadt Linz* (1986): 6: *"das grundlegende Stilgesetz für die holländische Kunst"*; ibid., *"Die koordinierende Linienkomposition. Das Prinzip der Koordination vereinigt in der holländischen Kunst die Teile des Bildes im Gegensatz zu dem der Subordination in der Kunst der romanischen Völker, deren Bildaufbau meist mit Variationen der Dreiecks- oder Pyramidenkomposition beschreibbar ist."* Unless otherwise indicated below, all translations are by David Britt.

2. Alois Riegl, unpublished literary remains, quoted in Margaret Olin, *"Spätrö-mische Kunstindustrie:* The Crisis of Knowledge in Fin de Siècle Vienna," *Wien und die Entwicklung der kunsthistorischen Methode,* Akten des XXV. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte 1, no. 1 (Vienna: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1984): 35: *"Die Frage: was ist schön? wird immer schwerer zu beantworten. Alles Seiende ist schön; mindestens alles Farbige."*

3. Alois Riegl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze,* ed. Karl M. Swoboda (Augsburg: Benno Filser, 1929), 60: *"knüpft die Entwicklung nicht etwa an die Naturdinge als solche, die sich vielmehr immer gleichgeblieben sind, sondern an die Art und Weise an, in welcher der Mensch die Naturdinge jeweilig reproduziert schauen wollte."*

4. Alois Riegl, *Die spätrömische Kunstindustrie nach den Funden in Österreich-Ungarn,* 2d ed. (Vienna: Österreichische Staatsdruckerei, 1927), 401: *"Alles Wollen des Menschen ist auf die befriedigende Gestaltung seines Verhältnisses zu der Welt ...gerichtet. Das bildende Kunstwollen regelt das Verhältnis des Menschen zur sinnlich wahrnehmbaren Erscheinung der Dinge: es gelangt darin die Art und Weise zum Ausdruck, wie der Mensch jeweilig die Dinge gestaltet oder gefärbt sehen will."* An English translation (not used here) by Rolf Winkes exists: *Late Roman Art Industry* (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 1985).

5. Hans Sedlmayr, "Die Quintessenz der Ideen Riegls," in Riegl (see note 3), xx: *"Lehre von den wesensmöglichen Richtungen des Kunstwollens."*

6. Riegl (see note 4), 19: *"die leitenden Gesetze des Kunstwollens oftmals in nahezu mathematischer Reinheit"*; ibid., *"diese Gesetze* [treten] *nicht mit völliger Klarheit und Ursprünglichkeit zutage."*

7. Riegl (see note 4), 19: *"dem 'Inhalte,' das ist den Gedanken poetischer, religiöser, didaktischer, patriotischer usw. Art, die sich mit den menschlichen Figuren...verknüpfen und den Beschauer...von dem eigentlichen Bildkünstlerischen im Kunstwerk, das ist der Erscheinung der Dinge als Form und Farbe in Ebene oder Raum, ablenken."*

8. Sedlmayr (see note 5), xxxiii: *"Fast alle Ideen Riegls sind schon sehr früh, im Grunde seit er zu arbeiten begann, da."*

9. Loh (see note 1), 16: *"Ich habe bei meiner Lektüre von Riegls Werken den... Eindruck gewonnen, dass bei ihm wissenschaftliches Denken und ausgeführtes Werk von den 'Altorientalischen Teppichen' (1891) bis zu seinen letzten Aufsätzen wie aus einem Guss sind."*

10. Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1978), 1:55: *"Aus dem ölglatten Geist der zwei letzten Jahrzehnte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts hatte sich plötzlich in ganz Europa ein beflügelndes Fieber erhoben. Niemand wusste genau, was im Werden war; niemand vermochte zu sagen, ob es eine neue Kunst, ein neuer Mensch, eine neue Moral oder vielleicht eine Umschichtung der Gesellschaft sein solle. Darum sagte jeder davon, was ihm passte. Aber überall standen Menschen auf, um gegen das Alte zu kämpfen. Allenthalben war plötzlich der rechte Mann zur Stelle; und was so wichtig ist, Männer mit praktischer Unternehmungslust fanden sich mit den geistig Unternehmungslustigen zusammen."*

11. Rudolf Kassner, *Buch der Erinnerung* (Leipzig: Insel, 1938), 125: *"Die neunziger Jahre sind dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass man in ihnen zum letzten Mal Inhalt und Form einer Dichtung zu trennen und die Dichtung als Substrat eines Gedankengebäudes hinzunehmen wagte, was alles auf die grosse Antinomie des Liberalismus: Glauben und Wissen betreffend, zurückgeführt werden darf."*

12. Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, *Aphorismen* (Berlin: Gebrüder Paetel, 1906), 2: *"Die verstehen sehr wenig, die nur das verstehen, was sich erklären lässt."*

13. Kassner (see note 11), 124: *"Die neunziger Jahre bedeuteten neben manchem anderen... den sehr allmählichen Übergang von der streng wissenschaftlichen, naturwissenschaftlichen, kausalen Methode zu einer geistesgeschichtlichen Konzeption der Dinge."*

14. Kassner (see note 11), 84: *"Die neunziger Jahre des verflossenen Jahrhunderts... waren das Jahrzehnt... jenes Individualismus, von dem sich die Welt jetzt, die Jugend vor allem, abgekehrt hat."*

15. Max Dvořák, quoted in Margaret Olin, *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1992), 175.

16. Formulations as found in *Die spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (see note 4), 19: *"Erscheinung der Dinge als Form und Farbe in Ebene oder Raum"*; ibid., *"Gedanken poetischer, religiöser, didaktischer, patriotischer usw. Art."*

17. Alois Riegl, unpublished literary remains, quoted in Margaret Olin, "Self-Representation: Resemblance and Convention in Two Nineteenth-Century Theories of Architecture and the Decorative Arts," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 49 (1986): 390.

18. Alois Riegl, *Historische Grammatik der bildenden Künste,* ed. Karl Maria Swoboda and Otto Pächt (Graz: Böhlau, 1966), 9.

19. On what follows, see Gottfried Jäger, "Die Herbartianische Ästhetik: Ein österreichischer Weg in die Moderne," in Herbert Zeman, ed., *Die österreichische Literatur: Ihr Profil im 19. Jahrhundert, 1830–1880* (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1982), 195–219.

20. Wilhelm Windelband, *Die Geschichte der neueren Philosophie,* 5th ed. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1911), 1:402: *"Was wir also gewöhnlich die Eigenschaft eines*

Dinges nennen, ist in Wahrheit nur die Beziehung, in der es zu irgend einem andern Dinge steht. So ist 'weiss' die Eigenschaft eines Körpers nur in Beziehung auf das Licht, das es reflektiert, 'hart' nur die Beziehung eines Körpers auf einen andern, der in den Raum, welchen er einnimmt, eintreten will, usf. Alle Eigenschaften sind Beziehungsbegriffe."

21. Jäger (see note 19), 199: "*in aller Wahrnehmung* [sieht] *nur den Schein von Verhältnissen . . . , den eine Mehrzahl von an sich unerkennbaren Seienden bilden.*"

22. Robert Zimmermann, quoted in Jäger (see note 19), 201: "*eine Proportionslehre im grossartigen Massstabe.*"

23. Robert Zimmermann, *Aesthetik* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1858–65), 1:750: "*ästhetisch betrachtet völlig gleichgiltig.*"

24. Zimmermann (see note 23), 2:214–15: "*zum Geschlecht der einfach, doppelt und mehrfach gekrümmten Flächen; die einen sind Kugel-, die andern Ellipsoid-, die dritten Parabolid-, Hyperbolid-, Kreissegmentflächen u.s.w., jede Form für sich gefallend und alle unter einander harmonisch verwandt.*"

25. Zimmermann (see note 23), 2:86: "*Die Naturwahrheit hat vor der Naturunwahrheit ästhetisch, d.h. vom Gesichtspunkt der Nachahmung eines Vorbildes aus, keinen Vorzug.*"

26. Quoted in Jäger (see note 19), 207: "*Wahrheit in Anschauungsform.*"

27. Zimmermann (see note 23), 2:64: "*Er ist seine eigene Erscheinung und das wodurch er gefällt, sind seine eigenen Formen.*"

28. Riegl (see note 4), 405: "*Die engste Parallele zu dem angedeuteten Entwicklungsprozess, wenigstens in seinen ersten zwei Stadien, bietet eine Betrachtung der Geschichte der bildenen Künste seit Karl dem Grossen: im Mittelalter das Streben nach Isolierung der Dinge (diesmal im Raume, anstatt der antiken Ebene), nach einer objektiven Norm ihrer (dreidimensionalen) Erscheinung und nach engster Verbindung mit dem Kultus . . . ; in der neueren Zeit hingegen das Streben nach Verbindung der Dinge untereinander (im Raume, sei es mittels der Linie wie im 16. Jahrhundert oder mittels des Lichtes wie in 17. Jahrhundert oder mittels der individuellen Färbungen wie in der modernen Kunst, nach Wiedergabe ihrer subjektiven Erscheinung und nach Loslösung vom Kultus, wofür nun Philosophie und Wissenschaft (als diejenigen Disziplinen, welche die natürliche Verbindung der Dinge untereinander verkünden) eintreten.*"

29. Riegl (see note 4), 403: "*der Wandel in der spätantiken Weltanschauung war eine notwendige Durchgangsphase des menschlichen Geistes, um von der Vorstellung eines (im engeren Sinne) rein mechanischen, reihenweisen, gleichsam in die Ebene projizierten Zusammenhanges der Dinge zu derjenigen eines allverbreiteten chemischen, gleichsam den Raum nach allen Richtungen durchmessenden Zusammenhanges zu gelangen.*"

30. Adolf Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* (Strasbourg: Heitz & Mündel, 1893), 98: "*Eine Gruppe im künstlerischen Sunne beruht nicht auf einem Zusammenhang, der durch den Vorgang entsteht, sondern muss eine Erscheinungszusammenhang sein, welcher sich als ideelle Raumeinheit gegenüber dem realen Luftraum behauptet.*" English translation from Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, eds. and trans., *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German*

Aesthetics, 1873–1893 (Santa Monica: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994), 266.

31. Heinrich Wölfflin, *Die klassische Kunst: Eine Einführung in die italienische Renaissance* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1899), 197: "*Dass der klassische Stil seine Einheit gewinnt, indem er die Teile zu freien Gliedern verselbständigt, und dass der barocke Stil die gleichmässige Selbständigkeit der Teile zugunsten eines mehr einheitlichen Gesamtmotivs aufhebt. Dort Koordination der Akzente, hier Subordination.*"

32. August Schmarsow, *Grundbegriffe der Kunstwissenschaft* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1905), 259: "[die] *gewohnte Definition versteht unter Gruppe eine Mehrzahl von Einzelwesen, die zueinander in Beziehung stehen. Sie geht also von der Tätigkeit der Lebewesen aus, die aufeinander gerichtet ist.... Aber für den Gesichtspunkt räumlicher Anschauung ergibt sich diese innere Zusammenfassung als wenig stichhaltig.*"

33. Quoted in Jäger (see note 19), 210: "*dem Formalismus ist Komponieren alles.*"

34. Quoted in Jäger (see note 19), 210: "*Man gruppiere also Kröten verschiedener Art zu einer Figur . . . , dann ist das schön. Nach diesem Grundsatz müssten ferner auch blosse Formen- und Farbenreihen, die nichts vorstellen, schön sein, wenn nur in ihrem gegenseitigen Verhältnis Harmonie waltet.*"

35. Riegl, *The Group Portraiture of Holland*, 64. Riegl, "Das holländische Gruppenporträt," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 23 (1902): 72: "*Corporationswesen und Gruppenporträtmalerei stehen also im demokratischen Holland wechselseitig in engen Beziehungen und ihre Schicksale sind unauflöslich mit einander verknüpft.*" The English translations are taken from this volume, cited hereafter as *Group Portraiture;* subsequent references to the German are cited as "Gruppenporträt."

36. Karl Schnaase, *Niederländische Briefe* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1834), quoted in Werner Busch and Wolfgang Beyrodt, *Kunsttheorie und Kunstgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1982), 333: "*Die Kunst ist die zentrale Tätigkeit der Völker, in welcher sich alle Bestrebungen und Gefühle, Geistiges, Sittliches und Materielles am innigsten berühren, und sich begrenzen. Sie gibt daher selbst die Mittel an die Hand, um die Richtung und Kraft dieser einzelnen Potenzen abzumessen und zu bestimmen.*"

37. Schnaase, quoted in Busch and Beyrodt (see note 36), 309: "*Kunst eben so wohl bestimmend für das sonstige Dasein des Menschen, als dadurch bestimmt ist.*"

38. Schnaase, quoted in Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1982), 42.

39. Schnaase, quoted in Podro (see note 38), 43.

40. Podro (see note 38), 96.

41. On the Herbartian aesthetics of reception, see Jäger (note 19), 201: "*das auffassende Subjekt.*"

42. Olin (see note 15), 224 n. 4: "*Ästhetik: Relation der Theile zum Ganzen. Relation der Theile untereinander. Hat nicht berücksichtigt Relation zum Beschauer. Relation zum Beschauer macht* Kunstgeschichte. *Gesetzlichkeit darin macht historische Ästhetik*" (Riegl's emphasis).

43. Zimmermann (see note 23), 1:744: "*keine Geschichte.*"

44. Zimmermann, quoted in Jäger (see note 19), 215: "*historischen Geburts-schein*"; ibid., "*Platz in der Gesetzgebung des Schönen*"; ibid., "*Ausdruck einer bestimmten Stufe dieses Fortschritts*"; ibid., "*Verwandlung der Ästhetik in Kunst-geschichte.*"

45. Richard Hamann, *Der Impressionismus in Leben und Kunst* (Cologne: Dumont-Schauberg, 1907), 320: "*Auch für die Sehnsucht der kommenden Zeit sind bereits Stimmen laut geworden. Sie klangen, wenn wir recht gehört haben, wie: Mehr Hegel.*"

46. Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *Ästhetik*, ed. Friedrich Bassenge (Berlin: Aufbau, 1965), 1:259: "*Wie sehr es nun aber auch eine in sich übereinstimmende und abgerundete Welt bilden mag, so ist das Kunstwerk selbst doch als wirkliches, ver-einzeltes Objekt nicht* für sich, sondern *für uns, für ein Publikum, welches das Kunst-werk anschaut und es geniesst*" (Hegel's emphases). On the relationship between Hegel and Riegl see Wolfgang Kemp, *Der Anteil des Betrachters: Rezeptionsästhetische Studien zur Malerei des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Mäander, 1983), 16–24; Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 40–47; Loh (see note 1).

47. Hegel (see note 46), 2:13: "*Beides, die Ruhe in sich und die Wendung gegen den Beschauer, muss zwar im Kunstwerk vorhanden sein, aber die Seiten müssen sich im reinsten Gleichgewicht befinden.*"

48. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 168. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 147: "*In Breughels Bauernhochzeit und Bauerntanz im Hofmuseum sind die Figuren entweder in unmit-telbaren Verkehr miteinander gesetzt oder, wenn sie verschiedenen Gruppen angehö-ren, doch derart behandelt, dass wir an ihr momentanes Nebeneinander bedingungslos glauben. Man vergleiche nun damit etwa Aertsens Eiertanz im Rijksmuseum, wo die Episoden, in welche die Gesamtszene zerfällt, fast völlig verbindungslos nebeneinander auftreten. Während bei Brueghel die innere Einheit (der Handlung) in der gleichen Weise wie seit jeher bei den Italienern das Hauptpostulat gebildet hatte, überlässt es Aertsen grösstenteils dem betrachtenden Subjekt, die Figuren zu einer (äusseren) Ein-heit zu verknüpfen. Wir begegnen somit in dem holländischen Genre des Pieter Aertsen der gleichen Neigung, die einzelnen Figuren im Bilde geistig gegeneinander zu isolieren und dafür mit dem Beschauer verbinden, die wir ... als älteste Grundlage der holländi-schen Gruppenportraitmalerei erkannt haben.*"

49. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 174. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 149: "*die alte Rei-hencomposition mit einer Raumcomposition und die symbolische Auffassung mit einem subjectiv-momentanen Ausdruck mittelst lebhafterer äusserer Bewegungen zu verbinden.*"

50. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 254. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 202: "*Aber fast alle Schriftsteller, die sich bisher mit diesem Thema beschäftigten, haben es aus der künst-lerischen Entwicklung der Persönlichkeit Rembrandts heraus zu erklären gesucht und für die Beurtheilung den Maasstab moderner Geschmackskritik zur Anwendung gebracht. In Zusammenhange der vorliegenden Arbeit können dagegen die drei erwähnten Bilder lediglich als Glieder in der grossen Entwicklungskette aufgegasst werden, die Jan van Scorel und Dirk Jacobsz mit den grossen Meistern der Mitte des XVII. Jahrhunderts verbindet. Sieht man, wie seine früheste Lösung des Gruppenporträtproblems sich noch enge mit den Werken seiner unmittelbaren Vorgänger berührt und wie er in seinen*

späteren Bildern das gleiche Problem in ganz consequenter Weise weiter verfolgt hat, so gelangt man zur Überzeugung, dass auch Rembrandt in der Hauptsache blos der— allerdings genialste und zeitweilig vollkommenste—Executor des Kunstwollens seines Volkes und seiner Zeit gewesen ist. Im Folgenden sollen also die drei Bilder nicht vom Gesichtspunkte eines persönlichen Rembrandtproblems sondern von demjenigen eines gemeinholländischen Kunstproblems der Betrachtung unterzogen werden."

51. Karl Schnaase, *Geschichte der bildenden Künste* (Düsseldorf: Buddeus, 1866), 1:48: *"die Grösse des Einzelnen besteht vielmehr darin, dass er den Geist seines Volkes fasse, ihm gemäss handele, das Unentwickelte in ihm zur Ausführung bringe."*

52. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 358. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 272: "[der] *selbstlosen Aufmerksamkeit*"; ibid., *"Urideal der holländischen Kunst."*

53. Margaret Olin, "Forms of Respect: Alois Riegl's Concept of Attentiveness," *Art Bulletin* 71 (1989): 292.

54. Olin (see note 53), 294.

55. Werner Hofmann, *Édouard Manet: "Das Frühstück im Atelier," Augenblicke des Nachdenkens* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1985), 86: *"Die Vereinzelung gibt den Ausschlag."*

56. Quoted in Olin (see note 15), 218 n. 38: *"Israels und seine Schüler sehen die Welt nur als Reflexe (das Ding existiert nicht für sich, sondern nur als färbiger Abglanz der Nebendinge)."*

57. Ernst Mach, *Beiträge zur Analyse der Empfindungen* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1886), 3: *"das Ich* [ist] *nur von* relativer *Beständigkeit"* (Mach's emphasis).

58. Jonathan Crary, "Unbinding Vision," *October* 68 (1994): 26.

59. Olin (see note 53), 294.

60. Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1980), 220.

61. Schorske (see note 60), 227–28.

62. Christian Tümpel, "De Amsterdamse Schuttersstukken," *Pantheon* 49 (1991): 121–28, 200. Other examinations of the *schutterstukken* in terms of social history include Marijke Carasso-Kok and J. Levy-van Halm, eds., *Schutters in Holland: Kracht en zenuwen van de stad* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1988); Ann Jensen Adams, "Civic Guard Portraits: Private Interests and the Public Sphere," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 46 (1995): 169–97.

63. Bob Haak, *Groepsportretten in het Amsterdams Historisch Museum*, part 1, *Schutters* (Amsterdam: Amsterdams Historisch Museum, n.d.), 25.

64. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 173–74. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 149: *"Aber der militärische Zweck, der namentlich bis zum Abschlusse des westphälischen Friedens seine ständige actuelle Bedeutung hatte, erforderte zwingend ein grösseres Maass an Subordination. Deshalb sind wir von nun an vor den Schützenstücken fast nie mehr im Zweifel, wen wir für den Commandanten anzusehen haben: Capitän, Lieutenant und Fahnenjunker sind die drei Chargen, die fast ausnahmslos mit aller wünschenswerthen Deutlichkeit gekennzeichnet erscheinen."*

65. Tümpel (see note 62), 200.

66. J. L. Price, *Culture and Society in the Dutch Republic during the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), 79–80.

67. Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1988), 181.

68. Riegl (see note 4), 11: "*Fortschritt nichts als Fortschritt*"; ibid., "*tatsächlich in der Geschichte nicht gibt.*"

69. This remains to be done. New findings by Erik Duverger open up new perspectives and even point to an overlooked subgenre related to the group portrait that seems to be unknown in the North: the portrait of the *gildeknaap*, the servant of the various guilds. On this and on true group portraits, see *Stadtbilder in Flandern: Spuren bürgerlicher Kultur, 1477–1787*, exh. cat. (Brussels: n.p., 1991), 83, 154–56, 326–28, 352–54, 389–91.

70. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 62. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 72: "*Dann sehen wir gleichmässig da und dort einen Verfall eintreten.*"

71. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 64. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 74: "*da die Entwicklung nach Erreichung dieses Gipfelpunktes keine tieferen Probleme und weittragende Lösungen mehr aufzuweisen hat.*"

72. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 308. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 238: "*für die Resultate der diesbezüglichen, nothwendigermassen weitschweifigen Untersuchung* [würde sich] *heute kaum ein hinlänglich dankbares Leserpublicum finden.*"

73. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 308. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 238: "*sondern auch den wissenschaftlich triftigeren* [Umstand], *dass die Auffassung, welche die in Rede stehende Periode der Gruppenporträtmalerei beherrscht, bereits sehr eindringlich an die moderne (unkünstlerische, hauptsächlich durch die Photographie bestrittene) Auffassung erinnert, die unmittelbar aus jener hervorgegangen ist.*"

74. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 307. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 237: "*es* [gibt] *wenige Perioden der Kunstgeschichte, über deren Wesen und bedeutung ... so wenig bekannt wäre wie über die holländischen Malerei im letzten Drittel des XVII. Jahrhunderts.*"

75. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 307. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 237: "*Nun dürfte freilich die Zeit nicht mehr ferne sein, in der man die Unbefangenheit gewinnen wird, zu erkennen.*"

76. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 307. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 237: "*ein eminent fortschrittliches.*"

77. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 308. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 237–38: "*im Grunde ein gemüthlicher, mit sich selbst und der Welt zufriedener Niederdeutscher.*"

78. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 308. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 237: "*das Gefühl in Form des Pathos.*"

79. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 308. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 238: "*dramatische Richtung.*"

80. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 253–54. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt." 201: "*hatte sich in Holland allezeit fruchtbringend und zu Neugestaltungen anregend erwiesen*"; ibid., "*der halbverwandte französische Einfluss wirkte sofort lähmend auf die höllandische Kunst, um sie schliesslich nach kurzer Zeit vollends umzubringen.*"

81. Price (see note 66), 75.

82. Sheila D. Muller, *Charity in the Dutch Republic: Pictures of Rich and Poor for Charitable Institutions* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1985), 50.

83. Tümpel (see note 62), 132.

84. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 63. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 73: *"eine einheitliche Handlung."*

85. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 63. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 73: *"der holländischen Kunst* [fehlt] *die Malerei der Handlung, das ist die Historienmalerei."*

86. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 63. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 73: *"der Unterdrückung aller äusseren Handlung."*

87. Albert Châtelet, "A propos des Johannites de Haarlem et du retable peint par Geertgen tot Sint Jans," *L'architecture monastique* (Mainz: Bulletin des relations artistiques France-Allemagne, 1951), 5 ff.

88. Riegl, *Group Portraiture*, 67. Riegl, "Gruppenporträt," 75: *"ein blosses Anhängsel des Historienbildes."*

89. Jochen Sander, *Niederländische Gemälde im Städel, 1400–1550* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1993), 74, based on James E. Snyder, "The Early Haarlem School of Painting I," *Art Bulletin* 42 (1960): 51–55: *"Die Vision des Augustus lieferte den Befürwortern dieser theologischen Vorstellung ein zusätzliches Argument aus der klassischen Antike."*

90. David R. Smith, "Rhetoric and Prose in Dutch Portraiture," *Dutch Crossing* 41 (1990): 81.

91. Smith (see note 90), 79.

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The Group Portraiture of Holland

Fig. 1. Jan van Scorel
The Pilgrims to Jerusalem from Haarlem
Haarlem, City Museum

Preface

W hen traveling today through the old cities of Holland, one is often impressed by paintings of immense size that are found nowhere else. Located primarily in museums, but also in city halls, hospitals, poorhouses, and guildhalls, these paintings generally portray a number of full- or half-length figures, usually life-size. The figures are arranged in a way that makes them seem either to have no relation to one another or only a loose one, so that the viewer can hardly doubt that the paintings are intended as portraiture.

These group portraits, as they are generally called, date almost exclusively from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They are not found evenly distributed throughout the Netherlands, but mostly in North and South Holland, in the major centers of Holland's national style, especially in Amsterdam and, to a lesser extent, Haarlem. Other cities, such as The Hague, Delft, and Leiden, and even such minor centers as Gouda, Alkmaar, and Hoorn, also took pride in seeing their worthy citizens portrayed within various corporate groups. By contrast, all the rest of what were once the United Provinces produced no more than a few isolated examples; and outside this region, group portraiture was virtually nonexistent. Even in the neighboring Southern Netherlands, which had formed a unity with Holland in all cultural matters up to the middle of the sixteenth century, true group portraiture never arose. Moreover, with the exception of a few sporadic cases, it never took root even in Utrecht, though that city was one of the old artistic centers of Holland that traditionally acted as a link to the cities in Flanders and Brabant.

From the beginning, the public's interest in group portraiture was as restricted to Holland as was its production. Other categories of painting from Holland, such as individual portraiture, landscape, genre, and still life, were sold abroad in such quantities during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that many painters from Holland can no longer be studied on their own home territory. Group portraits, by contrast, have tended to stay put. The fact that most were owned by corporate bodies rather than private parties is only part of the explanation. The truth is that the art-viewing public outside Holland has consistently rejected these works; it never developed a taste for them. The reason is not hard to guess: the lack of action in the juxtaposition of the figures, relieved at most by awkward gestures frozen in midair, strikes the modern viewer at first glance as dull or even jarring. The impression can

hardly have been more favorable among that part of the European public of
the past two centuries that has been influenced by the art of the Romance
countries. Group portraiture seems, therefore, to be something of a specialty
of Holland. But how exactly do we define the genre?

A group portrait, as opposed to an individual portrait, unites a number
of figures in one picture. It does not include family portraiture, which is so
common in the history of art, because the family portrait is essentially noth-
ing more than an elaboration of the individual portrait. A husband and a wife
are, so to speak, two sides of the same coin, their children of the same stamp,
and all of them are naturally of the same mintage. This family resemblance
leads to a natural unity in a work of art that precludes the need for any spe-
cial tricks of pictorial conception or composition. That is why it comes as no
surprise that family portraits began to be produced as early as portraits of
individuals: we find them in Egypt during the Old Kingdom and, especially,
among the Romans. Another category that needs to be eliminated from our
discussion is that of the friendship portraits produced in Italy and Flanders,
which portray two or more persons who are bonded to each other solely by
personal inclination.

The groups in question consist of completely autonomous individuals who
associated themselves with a corporation solely for a specific, shared, practi-
cal, and public-spirited purpose, but who otherwise wished to maintain their
independence. The group portrait of Holland therefore essentially consists of
a series of portraits of individuals. At the same time, however, it is expected
to express clearly the characteristics of the particular organization involved
and the nature of the situation that is temporarily uniting the figures into
a group. The group portrait is therefore neither an extension of individual
portraiture nor a kind of mechanical arrangement of single portraits into a
tableau; rather, it is the depiction of a number of autonomous members of a
voluntary corporation. Another way of referring to it might be "corporate"
portraiture.

It follows that the histories of corporate organizations and of group
portraiture in democratic Holland were intimately connected, and that their
fortunes went hand in hand. The early stages of both took place in the final
decades before the outbreak of the religious wars. This heydey was character-
ized by the predominance of democratic equality among the sitters and an
emphasis on the individual portrait rather than on the chain of command and
the coherence of the group as a whole. With the Wars of Independence, how-
ever, there was a definite move to create a hierarchy among the members of
corporations, and the accompanying change in the conception and composi-
tion of group portraiture clearly reflects this: now the unity of the group takes
precedence over individual autonomy, while never successfully destroying it.
Consequently, corporate life and group portraiture both flourished as never
before, roughly until the signing of the Peace of Westphalia. Then, steadily, a
decline set in. By the time the House of Orange was restored at the beginning
of the 1670s, both institutions had lost their momentum, even though they

managed to survive and eke out a meager existence throughout the entire eighteenth century and beyond into the Napoleonic era.

Now, because of the undeniably close connection between corporations and group portraiture, anyone easily satisfied by quick answers might conclude that there is a causal relationship between them, thus making the arrangement of a group portrait nothing more than a simple reflection of contemporary corporate structure. Surely it is more accurate to see them as parallel manifestations of a higher, third force at work in Holland's culture, which was responsible for producing other analogous phenomena as well. It seems unlikely that enough time has passed to identify this third force with any degree of confidence, and that is why our investigation has been limited to group portraiture alone.

Group portraiture has long been acknowledged as a specialty of Holland, and since modern research, in keeping with modern tastes in art, has recently developed a keen interest in Hollandish painting in general, it ought to follow that scholars would first turn to the theme that is most typical of Holland. Surprisingly, however, this has not been the case. Among the several hundred that have survived to the present day, the only group portraits to have received any attention are those, like Rembrandt's *Night Watch*, that contain a unifying action of some sort. Furthermore, scholars have tended to focus almost exclusively on the action as such. Therefore, the aspect of Holland's group portraiture that has engaged scholars to date has been precisely the one that is uncharacteristic of portraiture and atypical of painting in Holland.

This tendency to emphasize action is less surprising in light of the fact that modern scholarship approaches other forms of art in Holland, such as individual portraiture, landscapes, and genre, in the same way: they are all judged according to the standards of modern taste. No one ever gives a thought about what the painters themselves and their original viewers may have had in mind. Group portraits, because their features are so specific to portraiture, and because they lack any coherent group action, apparently do not appeal at all to modern tastes. And that is why, for modern scholarship, they are a marginal phenomenon, remote from the great mainstream developments of art history, respectfully recorded but not otherwise discussed. Yet, some of us are convinced that the mission of our discipline is not simply to find the things in the art of the past that appeal to modern taste, but to delve into the artistic volition (*Kunstwollen*) behind works of art and to discover why they are the way they are, and why they could not have been otherwise. And we know that group portraiture is the one category, more than any other, that will reveal the true nature of the artistic volition of Holland.

Scholarship has long noted that the art of Holland contains almost no action. In other words, the Hollanders produced no history painting. It has also been rightly noted that portraiture was seen as a substitute for it. Landscape, genre painting, and all the other forms of painting in Holland were based on the same artistic intention we have already noted in its portraiture: either the complete suppression of any external action or at least the

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displacement of physical movement by certain psychological aspects of the action. In the landscape and genre painting of Holland, both of which have great appeal to modern taste, this principle operates in the same way that it does in group portraiture, with the difference that a lack of action seems quite natural in landscape painting, and in genre scenes there is always just enough activity to distract us from noticing how little is really going on. In contrast, it is easy to overlook the internal action, the psychological life, of the figures in a group portrait. Having recognized the shared principles underlying all art in Holland, it must be acknowledged that group portraiture is the most typical, and thus for art history the most important, form of Hollandish painting, precisely because it diverges so radically from modern art. A history of the evolution of group portraiture in Holland therefore amounts to nothing less than a history of the origins of all painting in Holland. Surely, then, the following attempt to investigate the nature of group portraiture and to sketch out its evolution requires no further justification.

There is more at stake here than merely satisfying scholarly curiosity: this study may also lead to a more impartial aesthetic appraisal of group portraiture. The dominant tendency nowadays is to let the work of art vanish as a physical object and become absorbed into the inner subjective experience of the viewer. For precisely that reason, it now seems possible to approach group portraits with the hope of finding renewed aesthetic enjoyment. Historians are wise to be wary of this point of view, however, as the old Hollanders were far removed from extreme subjectivism. Group portraits are very deceptive: the serene, static, and yet deeply intense gazes of the figures make the viewer oblivious of anything that is at odds with the dominant mood. However art may reveal itself to humankind, we stand to benefit from it, and it is one of the goals of this book to contribute something, however small, to that end.

Precisely because the significance of the theme of group portraiture has previously been ignored — and the present investigation will therefore have great implications for subsequent scholarship — it is important to define the perimeters within which this first, tentative study seeks, and is entitled, to reach valid conclusions. The greatest difficulty has been that nearly all of the rich source material is far away in Holland, and that reproductions were mostly unavailable and had to be specially made. Moreover, it was clear from the start that not all relevant paintings could be included in the study. Chronologically speaking, Rembrandt's *Staalmeesters* [*The Syndics of the Drapers' Guild*] is the latest example, representing a high point in the evolution, after which no more profound problems or far-reaching solutions arose. As far as geography is concerned, I have chosen to concentrate exclusively on Amsterdam and Haarlem, cities that have always been in the forefront of cultural developments in Holland. Even with these restrictions, there were still a number of group portraits that I could not see because they are stored in the overcrowded depots of the Rijksmuseum, though I am confident that they are the less important ones. I was also unable to study some of the examples in the Amsterdam City Hall. Furthermore, because this study had to be kept

within bounds, I have been able to discuss and reproduce only a fraction of the paintings that I was able to see. I could, for the sake of completeness, go back and search out all the paintings that were originally not available, but too many other prior commitments would have prevented me from doing so for several years. Finally, I chose not to postpone the publication of this investigation of group portraiture because I am quite confident that I have neither overlooked any important artists nor any well-known, accessible paintings that might have had a crucial influence on the general evolution.

There is little to report about the existing literature on the topic. Group portraiture is always mentioned by the scholars who have dealt at any length with painting in Holland in general; among German scholars, Wilhelm Bode and, of late, Carl Neumann are particularly important. No one, however, has gone much beyond discussing a few isolated cases in very general terms. Herman Riegel (*Beiträge zur niederländischen Kunstgeschichte* [Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1882], 1:107–62) and Émile Michel (*Revue des deux mondes,* December 1890 [865–909]) have sketched out the main course of the evolution of group portraiture in Holland, just as Vosmaer (*L'art* 3, no. 2 [1877]: 73–77) has done for the theme of the anatomy lesson. Still, none of them has attempted to investigate the inherent continuity of the evolution or the motivating forces behind it. On the other hand, there are a number of specialized essays on narrow topics by Dutch authors, among whom D. C. Meijer, Jr., and particularly Dr. J. Six, in *Oud Holland,* deserve to be mentioned. These contributions provide a certain foundation for investigating group portraiture that is fairly substantial, especially in regard to the detailed analysis of the earliest works, because they stem from natives who have much more access to and understanding of local history than any outsider could possibly have. Nevertheless, even Dutch scholars have never tried to erect a unified structure on that foundation. This is no doubt because of the overabundance of material that still warrants organization and because of Dutch scholars' general tendency to focus on specialized topics.

This investigation of the group portraiture of Holland would never have been possible without the active cooperation of scholars there, and I would like to express my gratitude especially to B. W. F. van Riemsdyck and E. W. Moes in Amsterdam, and to Dr. Hofstede de Groot in The Hague. My hope is that the present, modest study, which could easily be expanded to fill several volumes, will be taken up in the not-too-distant future, above all by scholars in Holland, who are best qualified to pursue it.

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The Early Stages

Group portraiture could never have developed before individual portraiture, which began to appear in the Netherlands by the first third of the fifteenth century. Initially, portraits of individuals were not autonomous works but little more than appendages to history paintings. As always, painters continued to paint the usual religious images with their comforting message of immortality and redemption; now, however, they decided to include a likeness of the donor that documented his or her specific physical characteristics, thereby personalizing that particular person's relationship to the powers of salvation.

In the Middle Ages, physical attributes were seen simply as a necessary means to express the soul, the only thing worthy of attention. Thus, on the one hand, an important stage had been reached in that artists were again turning their attention to the chance, ephemeral qualities of physical appearances. On the other hand, particularly in Netherlandish art, the medieval attitude lived on in the way the portrait figures are pointedly shown carrying out certain spiritual functions in an only somewhat individualized way, as any comparison between a Netherlandish and an Italian portrait makes clear. Long after Jan van Eyck had begun to paint specific individuals, we still find many examples of portraits, Memling's for example, where the figures are shown in an attitude of prayer though there is no object of devotion, as there would have been in a winged altarpiece. We can therefore confidently assume that group portraiture, if indeed it can be said to have started to develop in the earlier, pre-Reformation period, must have had its roots in religious painting.

And, in fact, the first signs of group portraiture are already evident in the fifteenth century in religious paintings that portray more than one donor. The family portrait, as explained earlier, is irrelevant here. On the other hand, the two male and two female administrators depicted, for example, on the wings of an altarpiece by Memling, dated 1479 and located in the Hospital of Saint John in Bruges, are unquestionably related to later group portraits, because these individuals, while unrelated by blood, were temporarily united by a particular, practical purpose. The essential distinction still remains, however, that these figures, each accompanied by his or her respective patron saint, do not interact even slightly with each other, not even symbolically, and that what has brought them together is the selfish desire of each, as individuals, for the heavenly reward that their collective donorship of the painting is intended to assure.

The Earliest Group Portrait Associated with a Religious History Painting: The Knights of Saint John in Gerrit van Haarlem's "Legend of John the Baptist" in the Imperial Court Museum

Given Netherlandish art's predisposition for portraying donors in religious paintings, it is hard to understand why corporate groups would not have begun to enjoy the same treatment already in the fifteenth century. A definitive appraisal of that question is difficult, owing to the destruction of art that took place during the iconoclastic period and the dispersal of those older paintings from Holland that did survive. In spite of all the efforts of Gustav Glück, who has been specializing in this area of art history for many years, only one pertinent painting has been discovered to date: an altarpiece painted by Geertgen tot Sint Jans (Gerrit van Haarlem) for the monastery of the Order of Saint John in Haarlem, which is presently in the Kaiserliches Hofmuseum [Imperial court museum, now Kunsthistorisches Museum] in Vienna (fig. 2). It depicts three episodes from the legend of John the Baptist. Van Mander, who describes the painting vaguely as *"eenigh mirakel oft onghemeen historie"* (some sort of miracle or unusual event), dates it to the early fifteenth century. It has since been rightly noted — most recently by Fortunat von Schubert-Soldern in Dresden[1] on the basis of the style of clothing — that it can hardly have been painted much before 1500. Since Geertgen seems to have died quite a while before Dürer arrived in the Netherlands, the altarpiece probably predates the earliest known examples of genuine group portraiture by two or three decades.

The painting consists of three bands arranged along diagonals one above the other: at upper left is the entombment of the remains of the beheaded Baptist; at lower right, the burning of the saint's bones by Emperor Julian the Apostate. The middle band depicts the discovery of surviving relics by Knights of Saint John who then ceremoniously escort them into their monastery. Our primary focus will be on this middle section. A group of twelve men is assembled behind three sarcophagi, of which the central one is uncovered. Five of the men can be identified as Knights of Saint John by the Maltese crosses visible on the left side of their capes. One of them is recovering a bone from the open sarcophagus, while a second, from a half-kneeling position, is handing another bone to a third individual. One final relic is visible in the hand of a fourth person. The rest of the men are more or less passive participants in the scene. Ascending along the diagonal band toward the right, five more figures — who, as we will see, are identical with those already identified as Knights of Saint John — emerge on the other side of a clump of bushes and proceed along a path going up to the entrance of the monastery where they are met by singing brothers coming toward them with crosses, banners, and hymnals.

For the moment, we can take it for granted that at least some of the figures in the middle band of Geertgen's altarpiece qualify as portrait heads, even before we actually go on to prove it in the following discussion. The real problem is to determine if and to what extent the designation *group portrait*

Fig. 2. Geertgen tot Sint Jans
Three Scenes from the Legend of John the Baptist
Vienna, Imperial Court Museum

applies to this painting at all. We can tell that it is certainly not a pure example of group portraiture, because of the way two totally different narrative scenes are combined to form the larger composition. Moreover, it also does not fulfill the other requirement of group portraiture: that the group involved be a corporation with common, secular goals beneficial to the association as a whole, since the concerns of the Knights of Saint John were far narrower than even those of the hospital administrators of Bruges. The former were interested, namely, solely in attaining eternal bliss, something that each member can only do for him- or herself, not for the group as a whole. Consequently, *The Legend of Saint John* is still most accurately categorized — not only by outward appearance, but also by virtue of its innermost conception — as religious narrative painting. The only justification for considering it an early stage of group portraiture at all is that it does in fact depict a number of portrait heads in a group arranged side by side. Now what we have to do is prove that Geertgen, whom van Mander describes as a close associate of the Haarlem headquarters of the Order of Saint John, was in fact making actual portraits of living human beings.

A comparison between the group of twelve in the middle section with the multifigured scene below already gives us some vital clues. The heads of the figures in the lower group are remarkably diverse in their outward appearance: in the style of their hair and beards, in the way they turn their heads, in the variety of headgear, and even in their expressions. Each one of them has something distinctive about him; even at first glance, there is always some striking anomaly that sets one figure apart from the others. Turning now to the group of twelve, one is immediately struck by their uniformity: their garments are all nearly the same; the faces — all clean-shaven but one — are as homogeneous as one might expect from a group of people with the same ethnic background. There is not even any variation in the way they turn their heads. Notwithstanding all this, each head is treated in such an individualized manner that it could never be mistaken for any of the others. Why would the artist have made it more difficult for himself to vary these twelve heads, if he did not have a compelling reason? And that reason was surely none other than that he was obliged to base them on specific living individuals.

Now the evidence that we are dealing with portraits of actual persons quickly mounts. As mentioned above, five of the twelve men standing at the sarcophagi (fig. 3) are identifiable as Knights of Saint John by the cross on their mantles and by their uniformity of dress. (I leave it to local historians to decide whether the remaining seven were lay brothers and when the events depicted actually took place.) These same five knights reappear, as already described, slightly further to the right (fig. 4). Each head, though painted on a smaller scale, can be exactly correlated with its mate in the left-hand group. For example, the individual who was depicted at left as though speaking is now holding the two longer bones. The bags under his eyes; the long, straight nose; and finally the violet tunic make it impossible to mistake him for anyone else. Furthermore, another man, the one with the pointed chin and the

Fig. 3. Geertgen tot Sint Jans
Group of Five Knights of Saint John and Seven Laymen
(detail of fig. 2)

Fig. 4. Geertgen tot Sint Jans
Group of Five Knights of Saint John (detail of fig. 2)

obtuse angle between nose and forehead, is holding the same smaller, some-what notched piece of bone in both groups. The third man in line has promi-nent cheekbones and is the same fellow who, in the left-hand scene, was handing the longest of the relics to his neighbor, who is the same short knight with the broad cheeks, hooked nose, prominent lips, and devout look found at the extreme left of the upper group near the bushes.

Finally, the fifth figure, who appears between the two just described, can only be the remaining knight in the lower left-hand group whose face is markedly foreshortened because he is reaching into the sarcophagus. This is not, of course, a very portraitlike position. The figure's unusual ugliness — with his crooked and deformed mouth, as well as the lack of proportion in other parts of the head — may have been what dictated this pose. To repeat such an unsightly head, and, moreover, in such a prominent place so close to the viewer, may have seemed out of the question even for Netherlanders who have never had a reputation for being overly sensitive about physical appear-ance. It is impossible to tell whether this decision was made by the painter or the donors. At any rate, the first four heads in both groups are identical, and the only possible explanation for this is that the painter was under contract to paint portraits of specific living individuals. We can probably also make the same assumption about the seven "lay brothers" of the lower group, who may include the painter himself, though the assumption becomes less certain in regard to the participants in the procession. Of course, our main concern here is with the lower left-hand group of twelve.

If what we have before us are truly the portraits of twelve individuals, then the next question to ask is whether there is anything about the internal, psy-chological conception or the external, physical composition of the painting that unifies the figures into a larger whole, thereby promoting their status from that of juxtaposed individual portraits to that of a full-fledged group portrait.

Now, anyone whose understanding of painting is based primarily on expo-sure to Italian art — and that includes most art historians living today — will assume that Geertgen would automatically seize upon the narrative theme as the basis of his pictorial conception, for it conveniently provides the motiva-tion for the internal coherence of the painting, and it potentially unites all the participants in a common action — some as actors, others as passive viewers. Three Knights of Saint John are shown in the act of discovering relics; the remaining nine men stand passively by. What is extraordinary is that the lat-ter show absolutely no interest whatsoever in the main action: not a single one of the nine wagers a glance toward the colleagues who are uncovering the precious remains. There is simply no coherent relationship between the actors and the passive viewers.

Taking this observation further, we soon realize that the same is true of the relationships within the groups of active participants and passive viewers themselves, in fact even between the actors and the objects of their action — although the disjunction here is somewhat less evident and jarring. The

knight who is removing a bone is looking down in the general direction of the sarcophagus, but not directly at the relic in his hand. The figure kneeling next to him, in the act of handing a new find to the third person, is looking vaguely in the right direction but neither at the relic nor at the person about to receive it. Where this third figure is directing his attention is also not at all clear.

The passive figures fall into two groups: a smaller one to the left behind the active participants and a larger one to the right. The clarification provided by this division is, however, immediately undercut, because one member in the left-hand group is turned toward the right. This person seems to be speaking, and it may well be that his two companions are listening to what he has to say, but they do so without glancing or gesticulating in a way that would make that clear to the viewer. Or is the former stretching out his arms merely to take the relic from the person standing in front of him? This makes some sense, since he happens to be the very same knight who is holding the two long bones in the group behind the bush, but it still does not account for his passivity or that of his companions.

The situation is similar for five of the six members of the second group of passive participants arranged behind the sarcophagi. They stand motionless and rigidly upright in three-quarter view, with their torsos facing in the same direction as their gazes, either parallel or at right angles to the one among them who, to judge by the way he is pointing over to the discovery of the relics, seems to be speaking. Hence, even among the passive participants there are two active ones, but without a clear focus for their attention, as neither their gestures nor their gazes are directed at their listeners. Then there are seven listeners, who also lack a clear focus of attention, as they do not directly face the speakers. We have arrived at a very surprising conclusion: even though one would think that the narrative action in *The Legend of Saint John* would be the natural choice for Geertgen to unify the pictorial conception, the artist decided otherwise. Instead, he did everything in his power to disrupt the coherence of the action and to portray each figure as independent of the others and of the objects of their actions.

This phenomenon is too idiosyncratic and too fundamental for us not to explore its full implications immediately. To shed light on the matter, let us leave the central portrait group for a moment and turn to the one at lower right in which the bones of John the Baptist are being burned at the order of the apostate emperor. This will enable us to investigate how Geertgen handled a scene that has narrative action but no portraiture, and then to compare it with the group of twelve portrayed above.

If ever a theme lent itself to a subordinate arrangement, then here it is, portraying as it does the supreme ruler of the Roman Empire in the act of instigating a wicked crime. As a result, the relationships among the figures are much more coherent. The imperial protagonist with his crown, scepter, and ermine cape not only occupies the most prominent place in the scene, he makes a gesture of command with his right hand that one assumes at first to be the actual order to his henchmen to shovel the bones into the fire,

work the bellows, and then strew the ashes into the wind. Not only that, but at least two of the figures standing around the fire with the emperor look directly at him.

Nevertheless, it is not very long before a number of things start to look puzzling. For example, why is the emperor not looking directly at the fire, but rather off to the side? Why is the attendant next to him staring off into the blue? And why are the other attendant and the man with the bellows pointing with their left hands toward the fire when their gazes are otherwise focused on the emperor? The act of drawing the emperor's attention to the fire runs counter to the subordinating effect of his action, thus canceling it out and essentially transforming the active commander into a passive participant.

One slowly begins to realize that the emperor's gesture is really quite ambiguous. It is not strong enough to qualify as an expression of pure will, because it equally suggests the destructive pleasure that the emperor is deriving from the sight of his evil handiwork. To judge from the expression of grim satisfaction on his face, he seems to be saying something like "So be it, let the burning proceed." The iconographic explanation of this scene is roughly that the attendants and henchman have just asked the emperor if his orders have been properly carried out, and the emperor is answering "yes." This explanation will not make any sense at all if one approaches it with the expectations one brings to an Italian work of art, namely, that action is always the result of an act of will. In its place we find psychological interaction among the figures, so that emotion and attentiveness play a more important role than will. These are qualities that become apparent after a process of intimate reflection that we associate only with Northern Europeans.

Geertgen thus had two fundamental objectives in this history painting: first, he neutralized the subordinating effect of the main action as much as possible by allowing subsidiary episodes to compete with it; second, he took any hint of active will in the figures that had a potential for action and replaced it, whenever possible, with expressions of passive feeling, specifically with a kind of neutral attentiveness that combines the active and the passive. The first of these goals destroys the unity of pictorial conception that is familiar from Italian art, contradicting and fracturing the unity of the action. The second goal provides us with a substitute for coherent action, and this is the aspect that is typical of Holland or, if you will, typically Germanic. Once again, we have come upon a highly significant art-historical phenomenon that now needs to be investigated further.

The psychological manifestations that can be expressed in the pictorial conception of a painting are will, emotion, and attentiveness. Will is a purely active manifestation, and therefore it is always expressed by action. Every portrayal of action is at the same time in and of itself the portrayal of an expression of will. Action consists of human beings successfully overcoming an environment perceived as hostile. Acts of will tend to isolate individuals of action from their surroundings, raising themselves by subordinating their surroundings.

The figures found in ancient Near Eastern art are conceived exclusively as manifestations of will in this way: although their expressions are blank, they are always shown to be so totally absorbed in the action at hand (excepting the frontal eye that is always oriented toward the viewer), so undeterrable in purpose, that they create an impression of focused, energetic will. These ancient people had no interest in the external world for itself: for them, it represented little more than something for the will to subdue.

The entrance of the Indo-Europeans into the artistic world of the ancients brought with it an emancipation of emotion. In contrast to the active will, which is always intent on repressing and subordinating everything around it, emotion — the second of the above-mentioned psychological manifestations — has a distinctly passive relationship to the outside world. Recognizing emotion in a work of art presupposes a higher degree of subjectivity (inner experience) in the viewer. Individuals are generally aware of how their will is being affected by the outside world — either attracted to or repulsed by it — and respond accordingly with either pleasure or pain (pathos). In the case of attraction, the will gives in to the outside world; in the case of repulsion, it comes into conflict with it. The only way that the Greeks found to emancipate emotion was to show it as suffering, apparently because only in this form could it occur in consort with the self-absorbed will that was still the predominant element (tragic grandeur).

Attentiveness, the third type of psychological state, was also known in antiquity, especially in the early stages of the Roman Empire, where it formed the basis of pictorial conception, albeit within certain, narrow limits. The individual becomes open to the outside world, not in order to subjugate it, to unite with it in pleasure or to recoil from it in displeasure, but in pure, selfless interest. On the one hand, attentiveness is passive, since it allows external things to affect it without attempting to overcome them; at the same time, it is active, since it searches things out, though without attempting to make them subservient to selfish pleasure.

Therefore, if, on the one hand, will seeks to isolate individuals from the external world by having them selfishly conquer it, and, on the other, if emotion, no less selfishly, allows them to be either attracted or repulsed by the external world's sensuous pleasures (either way, emotion is still ultimately tied up with the individual urge to maintain separateness and to gratify selfish desires at the same time), then attentiveness involves a joyful acceptance of external things, a willingness to assimilate them intellectually, as well as a selfless surrendering to the outside world. So, if the will perceives the outer world as something objective in opposition to the individual, and if emotion succeeds in partially subjectivizing that objective, outer world, then attentiveness is completely subjective, since the individual attempts to accommodate the entire external world completely within subjective consciousness.

Attentiveness in its purest form was incompatible with a worldview, like that of antiquity, based on the idea that the entire cosmos consisted of individual entities, and that the whole world was of necessity broken down into

separate organisms, self-centered, isolated, and acting in confrontation with each other. Attentiveness in Roman Imperial art, therefore, was restricted to expressing a newly awakened interest in the outside world, and especially in fellow human beings,[2] and it did not yet cause subordinating will and the fundamental objective attitude to lose their dominance over the external world. Within this anthropocentric worldview, this could only be achieved by removing interest in the outside world from the realm of subjective arbitrariness and turning it into objective law dictated by a suprahuman will.

This is precisely the nature of the Christian worldview toward which everything had been evolving since at least Hellenistic times. It was characterized by a dualism that balanced isolating, self-centered human will with a divine will that relies on objective constraints to keep human beings connected to the outside world. In medieval art from the fifth century (*Vienna Genesis*) onward, this dualism is reflected in the way that figures shown frontally with respect to the viewer tend to strain their eyes sideways in the direction of the other figures in the scene. Even better illustrations are the medieval figures that move their limbs in all sorts of physically impossible directions, as though they have dislocated them. When modern observers dismiss this as clumsiness, they are overlooking the specific inner reasoning behind the style. One need only recall that the eyes of the figures in the artworks of classical antiquity are always turned in the same direction as their bodies, and then contrast this with how the direction of the glances of medieval figures is always at odds with the rest of their torsos to realize that they represent two fundamentally different kinds of artistic volition.

At this point in the evolution, history registers a new influx of Indo-Europeans. Unlike the Greeks and the Romans, these peoples had managed to maintain a relatively unadulterated primeval worldview, the purest—though also the narrowest and most unpromising—form of which is the *tat tvam asi* (that thou art) of India. For them, the objective law of early Christians living around the Mediterranean in antiquity resembled their own beliefs. Therefore, they embraced it very intimately at first, at least on the surface, only to transform it into something totally different, as one might expect. Subsequently, attentiveness came to be understood not as a response to objective law, but as something that came from within the individual, as an expression of subjective desire.

The difference in conception between Romance and Germanic peoples (between whom the Romance language–speaking half-Latins—the Lombards and the French—play an intermediary and hence often creative role in proportion to the degree of their intermixing and to the stage of history involved) was already evident in the Middle Ages; by the tenth century, it can no longer be overlooked. A complete parting of ways took place in the fifteenth century—at least to the extent that this was possible within the shared Christian tradition—just when the anthropocentric worldview began to erode. As a result, the way was cleared for the emancipation of the subject, which from the early Christian perspective could alone be granted by objective law.

Dualism was subsequently abandoned, and a unity was reestablished between individual will, which isolates, and attentiveness, which establishes connections. The difference between how this took place in the North, as opposed to the South, corresponds to the difference evident in the arts of each region and casts light on the course of the entire subsequent evolution.

During the entire quattrocento, Italian artists were interested in solving the problem of representing the human body so that all of its parts moved in response to a single act of will, as well as that of depicting figures in a narrative scene so that they all appeared to be participating in a single action. For example, if a figure's right hand was making a particular gesture, then the artist would try to make the rest of the body assume the kinds of positions that subjective experience tells us best suit that gesture. The problem was not solved until the beginning of the sixteenth century, even though the solution was keenly anticipated a full hundred years earlier. Will, action, and subordination come to dominate the pictorial conception of art just as they had in antiquity, so that the Italians of the sixteenth century who sought inspiration in history were quite correct when they referred to their own era as a "*rinascimento*" (rebirth) of antique art.

There was, however, a new, subjective component to the art of the Italian Renaissance which is especially evident in the psychological relationship of the figures to their surroundings. The objective approach of antiquity permitted figures to interact with only one or two other figures, but never with all of the other members of their group. Antique images made up of many figures are therefore very perplexing on a psychological level, regardless of whether they involve will, emotion, or attentiveness. The figures in a Renaissance painting, however, show that they are acutely aware of interacting with each other. That is to say, there is assumed to be a viewing subject present who expects the objective figures in the painting to coalesce into a unified whole. Consequently, everything is eliminated that might disturb the impression of unity. This is why Italian Renaissance figures convey much more strongly than their antique counterparts a sense of the psychological functions that connect the figures depicted, that is, emotion and especially attentiveness. This is the new ingredient of Italian Renaissance art that was missing in antiquity.

The Italian Renaissance's characteristic tendency to place will, which is most closely allied with action, on an equal footing with emotion and attentiveness establishes another connection between the artists of antiquity and the Italian Renaissance, who of course truly earned the right to consider themselves the direct heirs of their Greco-Roman predecessors. Italian Renaissance figures show more emotion and more attentiveness than do those of antiquity. They do not, however, compromise their dignity; that would have found an insurmountable obstacle in the Romance nations' innate, immutable aspiration for grandeur and for isolating expressions of will.

We have already learned something about the Northern fifteenth-century approach from Geertgen's painting, and our observations are only confirmed

when we look at the passive participants in the relic-burning episode. A large retinue is crowding around behind the emperor, but none of them is paying the least bit of attention to the emperor, to the activity at hand, or to the others. They are therefore not integrated into the main action and are not subordinated to any particular person or action within their own particular subgroup. One senses the satisfaction that the artist must have derived from his freedom to create figures that did not need to be directly related to the emperor, unlike the two attendants described above. Geertgen reveals himself as a true Hollander in this instance, doggedly clinging to medieval tradition, because it represented something inborn and unique to Holland. Southern artists, on the other hand, were eager to shake off such outdated notions as soon as possible.

We need only compare Geertgen's painting with any example of Italian painting from the same period to show the enormous difference in conception between the two: in the latter, the figures are always subordinated within their own subgroups, and these, in turn, are related to the main action.[3] In the Northern example, there is no outward connection between the action and the participants, but rather the highest possible degree of coordination. The features that in the case of the group of twelve we might have attributed to the stylistic demands of portraiture are found here in a history painting (even granted that some of the heads here may also have been based on living models).

It is clear from this that one of the general principles of early Hollandish painting was to avoid subordination and to use coordination instead to make their isolation from one another evident. How clumsy and forced most of their gestures look! That is because their movements do not represent a unified reaction to a single act of will, as they would have in an Italian painting. The artist has not even completely overcome the discordance between the orientation of the head and the eyes — that old hallmark of medieval dualism — exemplified well by Julian's face. Seen in this light, the Italian art of the times seems to have been more advanced than that of the Netherlands. What appears to be a weakness, however, was actually a strength. Netherlandish artists consciously rejected any expression of will in their paintings, which naturally made it impossible for them to turn to subordination as the means of unifying their images; instead, they explored the psychological, subjective aspects of their figures to much greater depths.

The same distinction is apparent in any comparison between a Northern and a Southern portrait head — shall we say, one by Ghirlandaio — the latter, even when it belongs to a passive onlooker, will flaunt its contented existence, self-satisfied and thirsty for conquest. By contrast, these men from Haarlem are introverted; their eyes are turned inward, reflecting the external world like a mirror. There are many instances (for example, the head peeking out to the left of the Moor standing with his back to us, plus the one below them) where the figures' subtle, vacant stares (with eyes diverging) take on an almost dreamy expression. The viewer is left in no doubt that these people are not focused on any particular object, for otherwise their eyes would line up.

There is not even the slightest trace of grandeur in any of these heads, not even in the emperor's. Nevertheless, the facial features of Geertgen's figures are marked by a profound state of attentiveness, inner composure, and at the same time an openness toward the external world that perhaps can best be described as "soulful." This quality of soulfulness, however, does not seem exactly appropriate to these sinners, and that is why the artist had to take such drastic measures to mark them as such, hence the caricatured features, uncouth mouths, and fixed stares, particularly of the two figures charged with overseeing the execution of the imperial orders. The figures' attentiveness, which is the most subjective of all the psychological states, is not individualized or directed toward anything specific, but still very generalized. Their gazes are scattered in all directions and are so artfully varied that it is impossible to determine what exactly the attendant figures are intent upon. This results in a rather absentminded staring that reads as a total lack of interest in any specific object.

For Geertgen, any attempt to locate the figures' attentiveness within the painting would have been felt as a form of action, an expression of will, an erosion of attentiveness as such. As a consequence, of course, the figures are disconnected in a way that would have been totally inconceivable in the objective art of antiquity, and which must have remained incomprehensible to the Renaissance Italians as well. It was, however, perfectly suited to Northern viewers of paintings, for they were much better prepared to unify in their own minds, as part of their role as viewing subject, all the objective and (within the painting) unrelated figures, just as the "attentive" figures in the painting do. This painting is an early witness to a decisive evolution toward subjectivity in art that would eventually leave antique and Italian Renaissance concepts far behind.

The coordinative attentiveness that was so evident in the portrait group of the Knights of Saint John, instead of the subordinating action one might expect, is exactly the same conception Geertgen used for the explicitly narrative scene of the burning of the Baptist's bones.[4] It is surely beyond dispute that such a conception would be particularly appropriate for a portrait, since the sitter's features can be shown as fully as possible, undistracted by any action. And, indeed, it forms the basis for the Netherlandish portraits of Jan van Eyck and his successors during the entire fifteenth century. All of these express soul rather than status. The artists always make the eyes the most intense area of interest; their sitters look out at the world with alert and inquiring, but not acquisitive, expressions.

In antiquity, the eyes never gained preeminence as mirrors of the soul over other parts of the face. To some degree, Italian Renaissance artists followed antiquity in this respect: they outlined the whole head and all of its features with tangible lines that followed certain rules. This approach made the viewer aware of the features as autonomous units, the eyes being just one of them. As is appropriate to a Christian and increasingly subjective kind of art, however, they did place special emphasis on the glance.

At this point, a comparison between a specific example of a fifteenth-

century Italian portrait head and our Knights of Saint John will make the special character of Netherlandish portraiture clear once and for all. Let us choose an example that is very typically Italian: Mantegna's *Portrait of Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga* in the Camera degli Sposi in Mantua. The cardinal has an absorbing gaze; his eyes and lips have a palpable sensuousness that directly affects the viewer who, because of the impression derived from the objects on view, completely loses his or her sense of self as a viewer.

Now, let us compare this with the Northern example. The Knights of Saint John, unpretentious but glowing with inner life, stand glancing about, their gazes turned inward as much as outward, to the point that one is not even conscious of the fact that they do, physically, have eyes in their heads. Only intimate study by a viewing subject who takes the time for self-discovery can truly do justice to their inner meaning and significance. Anyone who has done this, though, will never again mistake this distinctive quality of Netherlandish portrait painting.

Several minor details that frequently occur in very early portraits have a similar effect, especially the way the hands are represented. For the purpose of action, the hands are the most refined of all the parts of the body, and yet here they serve only to provide a contrast with the inner life revealed by the sitter's gaze. They are found resting calmly on a parapet or pressed together in prayer in an attitude of subjective devotion. Finally, they may be made to hold a ring, a little carnation, or something similar of obvious symbolic significance that also places them in the service of the figure's attentiveness, which operates on a subjective level. Whatever gesture they make always seems frozen midway, because the person being shown the symbolic object is missing from the picture.

Italian pictorial conception could easily accommodate the idea of an individual portrait, because the portrayal of a single person does not necessarily entail any action. By contrast, a group portrait was almost completely out of the question, because whenever more than one or two figures had to be combined in one painting, Italian artists felt compelled to create unity through a subordinate arrangement. Group portraits in the pure sense, like those later produced in Holland, never existed in Italy. The few examples of something similar represent a very limited and localized phenomenon (in Venice) that never advanced beyond the early stage of group portraiture, as we will see at the end of this chapter.

So, we now have an explanation for why group portraiture was produced only in the Netherlands, and, to be more specific, only in Holland, which up to that time had remained virtually untouched by influence from Romance countries: painters in Holland avoided action at all costs, even in their history paintings. Thus, they naturally welcomed a genre of painting that, by its very nature, not only required no action, but actually shunned it on principle. Action in a group portrait runs the risk of distorting the facial features, and, most seriously, of distracting the viewer's attention from the sitter's personality so that the portrait quality is impaired.

It was, therefore, inevitable that group portraiture would become the most sought-after and the most distinctive art of Holland, since no other genre of art dealing with the human figure resonated so sympathetically with the specific artistic volition of Holland. Although group portraiture was still more closely associated with religious history painting during Geertgen's lifetime, the time was soon to come when religious commissions would die out in Holland and be completely replaced by orders for group portraits from secular (no longer spiritual) corporations.

Even though we have established that the relic-burning episode shares the same pictorial conception as the portrait group of the Knights of Saint John, there is still one difference between them that should not be overlooked. The emperor's attendants are facing in all directions; some are even in profile, and one, the Moor, even has his back turned toward the viewer. The Knights of Saint John, on the other hand, all assume a three-quarter view facing either to the left or to the right, and each man is looking straight ahead. The sole exception is the figure looking into the sarcophagus, as discussed earlier. The artist was no doubt at pains to present the facial features of the knights as fully and as clearly as possible, something that had not been necessary in the history painting of the relic burning.

The physical likenesses of the persons in a portrait are objective and therefore independent of the viewing subject. Portrait likeness had been a goal of artists since antiquity, though one their medieval counterparts rejected on principle. For the latter, the human body was something transitory and subjective; only the human soul had objective validity. Then, in the fifteenth century, artists began to restore the objectivity of the body. However, their understanding of objectivity was different from that of their predecessors in antiquity: the objective, according to the Renaissance, did not reside in physical appearances themselves, as it had in antiquity, but rather in the subjective perception of the body. Now, the way that Julian's attendants turn their heads freely and easily is much more familiar to us from our subjective, everyday visual experience than is the uniform posture of the Knights of Saint John who are arranged according to objective, strict rules, and look posed. It is clear, then, that group portraiture served painters in Holland by providing an objective norm, without which their art would have quickly become extremely arbitrary, and thereby securing it a long-lasting, consistent, and healthy evolution.

Let us now turn our attention to the second of those elements to which every work of art owes its effect, namely, composition (in its broadest sense, as form and color). The main question is: how does Geertgen achieve the unity of physical appearance of the figures? What prompts us, solely on the basis of our impression of the painting, to see the group of knights, on the one hand, and the relic-burning episode, on the other, each as a self-contained whole, quite apart from the psychological characterization of the figures discussed above in terms of the pictorial conception?

Art historians schooled primarily in Italian works of art will, once again,

at first glance see nothing positive but instead a deficiency, for here, too, subordination is lacking. By the time Geertgen was working on his painting, artists in Italy had already evolved strict, pyramidal compositions that demanded subordination. The basic component of this type of composition is the diagonal line, the kind that connects things along the picture surface. This, however, is precisely what is missing from this painting. In the few instances where diagonal lines could not be avoided — such as in the relic-burning henchmen — Geertgen handled them as unobtrusively as possible. Overwhelmingly, the orientation of the figures, including some of the few active ones, is strictly vertical. With no diagonal lines to connect them, the Knights of Saint John stand like isolated and coordinated vertical axes. In spite of this, they still succeed in relating to each other. The reason they do so, once again, has to do with the viewing subject: In the pictorial conception, it was attentiveness; in the composition, it is space.

Art history distinguishes between two types of three-dimensional space: first, there is cubic space, a property of solid bodies, and then the free space between the figures. Art, like that of antiquity, that assumes the shapes of individual objects are objectively determined could never manage to depict free space. Early Christian art of the Roman Imperial period was the first to emancipate free space, but only the very shallow spaces close to the picture plane that occur between two figures, not infinite space. Quite significantly, this physical bridge from figure to figure first came to be constructed at the same time as the psychological one from person to person that we have described as attentiveness in the Christian sense. At this point, too, dualism makes its return: medieval figures seem to be projected onto the surface and have no volume, even though they are located in free space, with the result that they lack unity for the viewing subject.

During the fifteenth century, along with a newfound freedom for the viewing subject, space, like attentiveness, became a special concern of the visual arts. Once again, Italian and Northern artists parted ways. In Italy, artists strove primarily to render the appearance of objects (figures) in cubic space according to our subjective visual experience. Consequently, they developed linear perspective, with its focus on form, plus symmetrical, triangular compositions capable of integrating objects along the picture surface into a crystal-clear, objective, and standardized whole. In the North, on the other hand, from the time of the van Eyck brothers onward, artists turned their attention primarily to the free space between the figures, of course, only insofar as it is manifested by the figures, more specifically, by their color. Hence, they developed aerial perspective and landscape painting. At the same time, however, Northern artists also persisted in arranging their figures in rows stacked one on top of the other instead of in pyramidal compositions, for they did not want their figures to be too strongly interrelated within a plane. Finally, Italian artists rounded off their figures with rhythmic, ordered lines to present them as self-contained units, which, like all symmetry, operate within a plane. By contrast, the artists of Holland give their figures clumsy, rough

outlines that do not express any particular necessity; as a result, the way they move in space looks freer and more varied.

Both the emancipation of free space and the avoidance of diagonal lines that unify things within a plane are evident in both of the scenes from Geertgen's painting that we discussed; there are, however, differences in the composition as well, just as there were in regard to the pictorial conception. Excepting the active figures, all of the Knights of Saint John are standing in rows, one behind the other, about the same distance apart, their heads aligned along a horizontal line that is interrupted slightly left of center by a single protruding head. This interruption serves to tone down the architectonic severity of the arrangement to a certain extent, but comes nowhere near to achieving the integrating, subordinating effect of a pyramidal composition. For all that, Geertgen clearly decided on a relatively standardized, objective composition as the best solution for a group portrait, and clearly he constrained the pictorial conception with regard to the orientation of the heads for the same reason, namely, to obtain a serene portrait quality.

The relic-burning scene, on the other hand, is not even slightly symmetrical within a plane, not even in the form of rows. Once again, we need to make a distinction between the main action and the retinue of attendants. To the modern viewer, the main action seems fairly unified; that is because, even though the figures are not set up in rows or in the shape of a pyramid, they are arranged around a center to which all of them relate, and this amounts therefore to a certain form of subordination. However, that center is not occupied by a human being, such as the emperor, but by one of the basic elements, fire.

One can describe around the fire a diagonally placed quadrangle whose corners are delineated by the more distant henchman, the attendant of the emperor whose cape is trailing on the ground, the stone in the foreground between the little dog and the outstretched foot of the kneeling henchman, and finally by the point of this same henchman's shovel. This arrangement illustrates a principle of composition that the greatest masters of the seventeenth century were to use, Rembrandt foremost among them. Here, however, the action revolves around an important object, whereas later on there will only be something vaguely defining the area — an indentation in the earth, a branch of a tree — around which Rembrandt's beggars or Adriaen van Ostade's card-players and dancers will assemble.[5]

The depiction of the emperor's retinue, which as we have seen dispenses with symmetrical lines as a way of relating the figures in a plane, also lacks a spatial center that could have provided an objective means of unifying the picture (in that it would itself have been part of the painting). What happens, however — since depth perception is subjective — is that the viewing subject, because the figures recede in space, automatically assembles them mentally into a coherent relationship. Of course, this way of subjectivizing space falls short of modern standards. In those days, however, Geertgen's use of proportionately larger figures in the foreground, plus his manipulation of light and

dark to create the illusion of recession, represented outstanding progress. The way he makes the dark head of the Moor stand out against the light-colored cliff, and then tries to blur the edges between them, already anticipates later chiaroscuro painting. And this is true to an even higher degree of the entryway of the monastery at upper right, with its metal portcullis cutting darkly into the sun-filled courtyard.

Once again, the tendency on the part of the artists of Holland to go to subjective extremes required an objective mechanism to keep it from becoming too arbitrary. We saw this to be true of the use of attentiveness to establish unity in the pictorial conception, and the same is true for the spatial composition in the depiction of the retinue. Geertgen applied these objective standards to the portrait group of the Knights of Saint John, and it is probably fair to say that, even though later artists in Holland tended to be very conservative and retardative in their choice of composition, this had, on the whole, a very positive and beneficial effect on group portraiture in Holland.

The Earliest Autonomous Group Portraits of a Religious Corporation: The Portraits of the Brethren of the Holy Sepulcher

The first group portraits that stand on their own, totally divorced from religious painting, were commissions of the Jerusalem Brotherhood. Like the Order of Saint John, the brotherhood was a religious corporation whose members joined together simply to assure eternal salvation for each of them as individuals. To that end, they organized pilgrimages to the Holy Sepulcher, and therefore referred to themselves as "Brethren of the Holy Sepulcher." Their insignia consisted of a golden cross on a red ribbon worn around the neck and palm branches carried in their hands. Because the purpose of the corporation was still purely personal and religious, and not yet public-minded and secular, the paintings represent only an early stage of group portraiture. And even though the figures have graduated from the stage of being mere accessories in a narrative religious painting to become an independent genre, they retain in their pictorial conception fundamentally narrative aspects antagonistic to their function as portraits, as we will shortly see.

Five such portraits are known: one in the Haarlem Museum and the other four in the Kunstliefde Museum in Utrecht.[6] The Haarlem painting is the work of Jan van Scorel, who personally visited the Holy Sepulcher in 1520 as van Mander confirms in his biography of the artist: "He later included himself in a portrait with some of the Jerusalem Knights or Pilgrims, a painting of horizontal format in oils which is preserved in Haarlem in the Monastery of Saint Jacob or the Prince's Court."[7]

With one exception, the paintings in Utrecht are also attributed to Jan van Scorel, primarily because one of them includes a portrait of Scorel exactly like the one in Haarlem, and because it seems unlikely that the Brotherhood would suddenly have called upon someone besides their own professionally qualified brother to carry out the commission. Since two of the other Utrecht

paintings are closely related to this first one, it is thought that they, too, should be attributed to Jan van Scorel, while the fourth and last painting is usually ascribed to Anthonis Mor.[8]

Jan van Scorel's Group Portrait of the Brethren of the Holy Sepulcher of Haarlem

In the Haarlem painting (fig. 1), half-length figures of twelve bare-headed brethren walk in pairs in a procession to the left, at the end of which a painting of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is visible in a round-arched frame. The painting is held by a servant whose head peers out from behind the frame toward the advancing procession, thereby providing a contrast to the pilgrim's uniform direction of motion. The servant's fingertips appear at the top and the bottom of the painting, thus localizing it in space. The palm branches held by the pilgrims against their shoulders extend above their heads. The fronds slant toward the rear, once again reinforcing the procession's direction. The brethren's individual coats of arms and mottoes are painted on a paneled surface visible just over their heads, telling us that the background is conceived as a wall. Below, sheets of paper are tacked onto a railing that cuts them off at hip level. The inscriptions on these sheets tell us the names of the individual brothers. The sheet with Scorel's name has one corner folded back; the corresponding figure is the third from the right, and it thus represents Scorel's authenticated self-portrait.

The unity of Scorel's pictorial conception derives from the procession, in other words, from an action. It is expressed in the shared motion toward the Holy Sepulcher. A single event is depicted whose significance is rooted in ritual, and in this respect the conception is still basically that of history painting, as was the case with Geertgen. Inasmuch as the Holy Sepulcher is shown only in effigy, the image is symbolic, and here it already begins to come close to the earliest genuine group portraits, as we will later see.

Even though the figures are oriented by their action in a particular direction, there is still much greater variation in the turning of the heads than in Geertgen's group of Knights of Saint John. Not all of them face in the direction of the procession: some look out toward the spectator; one even glances toward the rear. The eyes, however, always conform to the direction in which the head is turned. The figures' movements are therefore varied and consistent in a way that signals the complete abandonment of dualism and, in itself, confirms that the artist had been in Italy.

Justi was probably a little too harsh when he pronounced these portrait figures to be totally lifeless. To him, their movements were very monotonous, which perhaps they are by comparison with the Utrecht paintings. Coming from Geertgen's portrait of the Knights of Saint John, however, the progress made in subjective conception is striking. One need only compare each figure's head with that of his neighbor to convince oneself very quickly that all of them are completely individualized, not only in outward appearance, but also in demeanor and psychological character. But, most importantly, the

expression of soulfulness contained in each of the glances has not suffered as a result of greater flexibility.

Of course, we could never mistake the expressions on these faces for the work of an Italian, for they represent neither thoughtless flaunting of individual personality nor fervent devotion; they communicate neither will nor emotion. Instead, they speak to us of a serious, composed inner life that still manages to remain open to the outside world — in a word, attentiveness.

The ones looking directly out at the spectator, the fourth, seventh, and ninth from left, are the least intimate, because we see too much of their eyes; only in his own expression was the artist able to combine the keenness of direct contact with intimacy. In contrast, the hands are remarkably restrained; they are visible for only five of the figures. Three of them are holding palm branches; one folds his hands devoutly in prayer; and the first one in line, the one who looks like a Native American, is holding his left hand up in front of him as though in astonishment: surely this is meant to show his respect for the Holy Sepulcher, which he would be the first one to see, and thus it draws his attention. Finally, the fourth in line, who is looking out toward the spectator, has the fingers of his left hand splayed in front of him as if he wished to direct the viewer's attention to the head of the procession. This gesture, however, is very timid, and only half of the hand is visible.

Now, given that the pictorial conception of the painting is certainly based on a shared action, and that not merely three but all twelve of the figures are participants, the characteristic reluctance of Hollanders to depict action seems to have lessened a bit as compared to Geertgen's Knights of Saint John. However, by making all twelve figures equally engaged in the same function, and allowing no single one to dominate over the others, Scorel succeeded in avoiding Italian subordination and maintaining the kind of coordinated relationship among the figures portrayed that assures each of them his equal and unrestricted rights. He does, to be sure, differentiate between the older and younger brethren, and includes a variation in dress that suggests a certain hierarchy. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the action, all of the brethren are equal, their leaders indistinguishable from their subordinates. New and therefore noteworthy, moreover, is the use of symbols instead of action to unify the pictorial conception.

The composition is basically the same as that of Geertgen's Knights of Saint John, although almost architectural in its severity; and this is what might have led to Justi's unfavorable assessment of the painting. Twelve vertical axes are stretched between two horizontals; the regular, decorative distribution of the coats of arms and the arrangement of parallel palm fronds intensify the impression of strict objectivity. Perhaps the artist thought he could compensate for the one-sided movement of the procession by setting up an opposing and even more rigid movement in the other direction. The heads give relatively little illusion of depth: the ones in the second row are not pushed back much further in space than the ones in front, but the partial overlapping is sufficient to clarify the spatial relationship. The figures are

crowded together in a way that distracts the modern viewer from noticing how little space there is between them. Since there is absolutely no room for air, we do not notice that the painter was unable to paint any — or rather that he did not choose to do so. The idea of figures marching along in rows, with some of them looking back, has its closest parallel in the dedicatory processions of the early Roman Imperial period such as the Ara Pacis Augustae. Netherlandish art, at this early stage of its evolution, when attentiveness was still very generalized and not expressed in an individualized and localized way, shares many other features with these monuments as well.

Jan van Scorel's Three Group Portraits of the Jerusalem Brotherhood in Utrecht

The earliest of Scorel's three paintings in Utrecht is probably the one showing the twelve Brethren who made the pilgrimage between 1520 and 1524 (fig. 5). Not only the dates of the pilgrimages themselves, but also the style of the heads, which we will discuss later, confirm this assumption.

The conception of the painting is basically the same as that of the group portrait in Haarlem: a double row of half-length figures carrying palms, all facing in one direction. This time, however, one can hardly speak of a procession, not only because there is no destination, like the depiction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in the Haarlem painting, but especially because there is no sense of movement. The figures — which are better classified as head-and-shoulder portraits rather than as half-length figures — are not arranged with their left shoulders turned toward the viewer, but are shown almost completely head on. A few of them, in fact, have even placed their hands on top of the railing, a clear indication that they are standing still. Furthermore, two-thirds of the figures are now looking out toward the spectator, more or less perpendicular to the picture plane, and only one-third of them — those roughly in the middle of the painting — stare out toward the left. Pure profile views, two of which occur in the Haarlem painting, are completely absent here.

Action is thus not used as a means of unifying the painting, much to the advantage of its portrait quality. What makes the pictorial conception of the work coherent? Surely, it must be the hand gestures that, this time, are discernible for every figure. All of the pilgrims hold out their palm branches in such a self-conscious manner that the intention to make the viewer notice them is unmistakable. In this way, they succeed in making the viewer — toward whom two-thirds of them are gazing — aware of the palm branches as the symbol of their shared interest. This is another case of symbolism taking the place of the action of a history painting, such as has already been seen in the Haarlem painting, though now to a greater extent.

There is just one apparent exception to this: the second person from the left who holds his hands in prayer. However, when the angle of his head in relation to the spectator is compared with that of his counterpart in the Haarlem painting (also second in line) who is still oriented toward the object

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of devotion, the Holy Sepulcher, then it becomes clear that this praying gesture, too, is meant symbolically: to make the viewer aware of one of the common goals of the Brotherhood.

The composition differs from that of the Haarlem painting in analogous ways. Admittedly, the figures still consist of vertical axes unconnected by diagonals, and their orientations have even become a little more monotonous by comparison with the earlier work, as we have seen. Hence, one might start to suspect that Scorel was reverting to Geertgen's approach, were it not for his orientation of the figures overwhelmingly toward the viewer, and the highly subjective recognition of a viewing subject (or, to be more precise, several of them) that this implies. The horizontal format is, however, emphasized in a much more harsh and somewhat startling manner that makes the figures look crammed together, not only because they are truncated at the elbow, but especially because the tops of their heads are cut off. Scorel must have considered it more important to make the figures leap out at the viewer from the background than to let them, as he did in the earlier example, rise to their full height. This is also why the excessively large and emphatically modeled hands project the way they do into the foreground toward the viewer; and, finally, why the heads are in stronger relief than ever before in Netherlandish art. We will see, however, that Scorel eventually went even further in this direction, so that this earliest of the Utrecht paintings remains, in spite of some progress, closest to the one in Haarlem. Finally, this movement out of the background is accompanied by a movement within a plane by means of diagonals, which, however,

Fig. 5. Jan van Scorel
The Pilgrims to Jerusalem from Utrecht during the Years 1520 to 1524
Utrecht, Museum Kunstliefde

do not appear to be created by the main components, namely, the figures themselves, but by accessories, namely, the palm fronds that the figures hold at various angles. Both innovations, the intensified relief and the introduction of diagonals, point to Italian influence, particularly from the art of Michelangelo.

Do these innovations enhance the portrait quality of the painting? The answer is yes and no. Clearly, it benefits from the isolation of the figures achieved through the lack of action that makes any form of subordination to a common action impossible, as well as from the increased physicality, flexibility, and liveliness. Here, however, Scorel's art has moved even further from the true aims of portrait painters in Holland — the representation of soulfulness — than was the case for the heads in the Haarlem painting that are turned toward the viewer. The palpable presence of the Utrecht figures is too tense; in several cases, their eyes bulge out so prominently that the inwardness, the intellectual introspection, and the attentiveness disappear almost entirely.

Moreover, just as the form of attentiveness specific to Holland has suffered in the conception, the representation of space specific to Holland has suffered in the composition. While the bulging heads and hands create a certain illusion of space, they do so only because of the three-dimensional appearance of the figures themselves, whereas the space between the figures now makes even less of an impression on the spectator here than it did in the Haarlem painting. This is also why the way the figures partially overlap each other is no longer enough to push the second row of figures back sufficiently from the first; as a result, all of them seem to occupy the same plane.

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Jan van Scorel was, as we know, in the forefront of Romanism or Mannerism in Holland. He sensed that the art of Holland needed to catch up with what it had missed in comparison to Italian art — especially in regard to reobjectifying the human figure, and depicting human will and cubic three-dimensionality — before it could continue on its own specific mission of exploring attentiveness and free space.

The second of the paintings in Utrecht of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher attributed to Jan van Scorel (fig. 6) contains twelve figures of pilgrims who made their journey between 1463 and 1525. In comparison to the dates of the first Utrecht painting [1520–1524], this represents an advance of at least one year; and, even though the earlier of the dates indicates that people were included who had made the pilgrimage in much earlier years, the signs of progress in the conception and composition of the painting speak to us of a later date of origin.

This second Utrecht painting once more contains twelve figures, of which two (including the alleged self-portrait of Scorel, see note 8) have been disfigured by later retouching. Several of the heads look like later additions. In this case, though, the artist did not paint the figures in one after the other, as he previously had done; instead, he first completed the five figures in the first row and then went on to the ones in the second. The results are obvious: the figures in front are once again distinct from those in back. Moreover, the figures' positions have greater variety in spite of the inflexibility along the vertical axis.

Fig. 6. Jan van Scorel
The Pilgrims to Jerusalem from Utrecht during the Years 1463 to 1525
Utrecht, Museum Kunstliefde

Because, against our habit, we have started off discussing the progress made in composition, let us go on to say what remains to be said about it. The marked three-dimensional quality of several of the heads and hands (one need only refer to the three figures in the first row on the right half of figure 6) is striking to any observer. On the other hand, the diagonals created by the palm fronds seem to indicate a certain desire for parallelism and contrapposto that, in keeping with Italian models, would be intended to integrate the figures within a plane. As mere accessories, however, they are far too weak to have that effect, which would not have fit comfortably in any case with Netherlandish art at this stage of its evolution.

Once again, the pictorial conception of the painting shows signs of advance: an overwhelming majority of the figures, no less than ten of the twelve heads, are turned toward the spectator. The remaining two look off in the same direction diagonally to the right. One of them, second from left in figure 6, is smaller and recedes deep into the background. The other, however, third from right in figure 6, is holding out his left hand in line with the direction of his gaze. His thumb and index finger touch in a way that one is inclined to read as a gesture accompanying speech, although there is nothing in the painting to which it could be addressed. The two figures in front of him do not respond in any way; on the contrary, they are completely absorbed in gazing back at the viewer. Therefore, this unreciprocated gesture can only be interpreted as a symbolic suggestion of the Brotherhood's common purpose. This time, there are two men praying, both staring fervently

out at the spectator, thus clearly demonstrating the symbolic nature of their act of devotion.

The third painting once consisted of nine figures; it is now divided into two panels [see note to fig. 7 on p. 377], one with four figures (fig. 7 [left side]) and the other with five (fig. 7 [right side]). The pilgrimages involved here took place between 1525 and 1535. The painting is probably not entirely by Scorel: the female figure, fourth from the left, seems to be the work of a different hand. The brushwork is conspicuously loose, particularly in the case of the pompous figure third from the right in figure 7, with its strikingly sculptural effect. Moreover, the haughty air of this priest seems to point in the direction of Italian influence as well. The second figure from the left in figure 7 also stands out, because he is not only looking straight out at the viewer in a frontal pose, but is also offering up a stonelike object in his closed left hand. This kind of intense interaction between the sitter and the viewer had occasionally occurred in individual portraiture in Netherlandish art in the fifteenth century. In Italian art, it had slowly begun to appear in history painting by the end of the quattrocento, until—in figures such as Saint Geminiano in Correggio's *Madonna with Saint Sebastian* in Dresden, dating from about the same time as Scorel's group portraits—it became one of the main sources of subjective effect. The introduction into Netherlandish group portraiture of the idea of direct interaction with the viewing subject was a perfect solution for Scorel at this time; after all, he had been working toward just such a solution himself. Between the Haarlem painting and the two earlier ones in

Fig. 7. Jan van Scorel
The Pilgrims to Jerusalem from Utrecht during the Years 1525 to 1535
Utrecht, Museum Kunstliefde

Utrecht, there is a steady increase in the number of figures who turn and look out at the spectator, an arrangement that occurs sporadically in the work of Jan van Eyck, but nowhere else in the fifteenth century, and not at all in Geertgen's portrait of the Knights of Saint John.

This completes the series of those group portraits that can be attributed to Jan van Scorel with any degree of certainty, and all we have left now is to discuss their chronology. None of the dating is absolute, but the dates attached to the pilgrimages do permit us to place the first Utrecht painting after 1524, the second after 1525, and the third after 1535. The Haarlem painting was probably not painted before 1525, since it was in that year the artist fled to Haarlem from Utrecht to avoid social unrest. Since he was back in Utrecht by 1528, the Haarlem painting probably dates from between 1525 and 1528. It may have inspired the Brethren of the Holy Sepulcher in Utrecht to order the same kind of portrait, starting with the youngest pilgrims whose journeys spanned the years 1520 to 1524, and then eventually including many older generations. Since these portraits probably also date from the 1520s, the difference between them and the painting in Haarlem is astonishing. It would be tempting to assume that Scorel traveled to Italy in the meantime, were it not for the fact that he appears as one of the pilgrims in the Haarlem painting and therefore must have already taken the trip at the time the picture was painted. In any case, there is still great need for an art-historical investigation of the development of this pioneering Romanist of the Northern Netherlands. Only after a closer look at all of Scorel's preserved works will we be absolutely sure

as to what portion of the Utrecht group portraits is by his hand, though we are fairly certain today, at the very least, that Scorel's painting in Haarlem provided the impetus for them.

Anthonis Mor's Group Portrait of the Utrecht Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher

Although Scorel's portrait style was characteristic of Holland, it also displayed definite Italianate tendencies. Scorel sought to unite attentiveness with grandeur and self-renunciation with self-satisfaction, but he never really rose above his roots in old Holland. The artist who perfected that synthesis was his pupil Anthonis Mor, who is, no doubt correctly, credited with the last of the Utrecht group portraits (fig. 8), showing five men from a pilgrimage of 1541.

It is obviously an early work, though characteristics of Mor's later style are also evident. Although the figures gaze in a variety of directions, none of them is looking straight out at the viewer, so that there is no opportunity for subjective interaction. Once again, the figures are slightly set back from the picture plane. Enough of their bodies is included for them to qualify as genuine half-length figures, and enough room has been provided for their head gear at the top. The heads have a self-contained, physical presence that goes beyond anything Scorel ever did, though they lack the soulful expressions of his figures. The dainty way they use their fingertips to hold their palm fronds and crosses indicates that they are fully conscious of themselves as complete personalities, eager to impress the viewer. This Italian aspect is mixed in with a sensuous, Nordic expression, particularly apparent in the two youths. Mor later suppressed this sensuousness when he tried to lend his figures an air of grandeur, though he never did so for the sake of effect alone.

With this painting, the Utrecht school began to move in a direction almost parallel to the Flemish. Aspects of portrait painting that had been troubling Mor were later taken up by Rubens, though, of course, he dealt with them in a new and completely different manner. Utrecht had nothing more to contribute to the evolution of Holland's national school of portrait painting. Its artists generally lost interest in portraiture the moment it became divorced from religious imagery. The few civic guard group portraits painted by Moreelse in the seventeenth century are late and isolated exceptions that have yet to be adequately explained. However, Romanism had the temporary effect of inhibiting the evolution of true group portraiture in other cities in Holland as well. This is especially true of Haarlem, the most important of the cities in North Holland at that time. In fact, there was only one city that managed to remain insulated from foreign influence and maintain its pure national character: the lagoon city on the Amstel. Amsterdam can boast of having produced the earliest genuine group portrait and of having practiced the genre — alone among all the cities of Holland — even before the start of the religious wars.

Fig. 8. Anthonis Mor
The Pilgrims to Jerusalem from Utrecht during the Year 1541
Utrecht, Museum Kunstliefde

The Venetian Group Portrait

It was shown earlier (p. 80) that a genuine form of group portraiture was never able to develop in Italian painting, because the main concern of Italian painters was to portray action, which they saw as a function of human will or as the self-centered emotion invariably associated with it. As a result, Italian figures lack the disinterested attentiveness that is a prerequisite of group portraiture. The Venetians, however, represent the one exception to this rule. Ever since Jacob Burckhardt, sixteenth-century Venetian painting has been described as an art of "being" [*Existenzmalerei*] standing in sharp contrast to the kind practiced especially by the Florentines that focused on action and emotion. Therefore, the conditions in Venice were somewhat more favorable toward the evolution of group portraiture, and we will now investigate to what extent.

First of all, I would like to make one important distinction: at this point in art history, the type of painting concerned with expressing states of being is not yet identical with the kind that concerned itself with mood, and that only the latter is capable of providing the groundwork for genuine group portraiture. Venetian painting is characterized by an absence of emotion, that is to say, of inner feeling. The impression of serenity that this creates frequently has great emotional appeal to the modern viewer, and can even be mistaken for selfless attentiveness; in actuality, however, it is just another typical expression of will characteristic of Romance art in general, and accompanied by the usual effect of isolating the individual. The serenity of Venetian figures is much more akin to the indolence found in Eastern art than to the soulfulness of the North.

Giorgione was the one Venetian artist who shifted the focus of painting somewhat away from the portrayal of being to that of mood. Although he died young, he had made remarkable progress in this respect, considering his countrymen had little sympathy for it. His successor as head of the Venetian school was Titian, who immediately introduced emotion into Venetian painting in the form of a pseudo conflict with the will that rings hollow today but that brought it in line with the Baroque art of Italy as a whole.

Obviously, artists interested in representing states of being would naturally gravitate toward individual portraiture, and countless works, particularly by Titian and Tintoretto, prove this was so. However, none of these works tempt us to describe them in terms of the soulful quality that characterizes Northern figures. In the rare cases that Venetian artists did delve into the psychological character of their figures more deeply, they still introduced an element of isolation that we perceive as a sharp contrast to what one would expect from a painting of mood.[9] While Venetian portrait heads do not exactly look down upon their spectators, they do have a distinctly superior attitude. Today, people often wrongly confuse individualism with egoism; for the early Venetians, however, the two really are one.

Sixteenth-century Venetian painting may have made inroads into evolving a painting of mood, but it did not progress much beyond that. Giorgione's

Concert notwithstanding, the impetus was not even great enough to lead to a distinct form of genre painting. At least a preliminary stage of group portrait painting had been reached, however, so that by the second half of the sixteenth century a genuine form of corporate portraiture had developed in Venice. The analogy to the circumstances in the Netherlands that this suggests was also expressed in other ways worth noting, in that the social order of the mercantile republic on the Adriatic also produced civic corporations. These confraternities, however, the so-called *scuole* (schools), did not promote a shared activity to benefit society as a whole but were instead religiously inclined, like the Knights of Saint John and the Jerusalem Brothers of Haarlem and Utrecht. The organization was motivated less by subordination to a common goal from which an individual might not profit than by guaranteeing its members eternal salvation, which, of course, is only acquired on an individual basis.

As mentioned at the outset (p. 61), the Southern Netherlands, which remained open to Romance influence, also did not advance beyond this point. As we have seen, the Flemish civic guards of the seventeenth century differed from those in Holland in that they retained their quasi-religious organization and believed worldly matters to be governed by God and higher authorities. Much of this applies in an analogous way to the *confratelli* (confraternity members) of the Venetian *scuole:* their members sought cooperation with others only for the sake of securing eternal salvation for each individual soul, a process that is, of course, a strictly private matter.

Therefore, it will be no surprise that Venetian group portraiture, which originated particularly in the workshop of Jacopo and Domenico Tintoretto, necessarily remained on approximately the same level of conception as Jan van Scorel's Jerusalem Brotherhood. It represents little more than an episodic event in the history of art, which would not warrant any further investigation did it not provide us with an effective contrast to its Northern counterpart. For that reason, one example is singled out for a short discussion of the main characteristics.

It consists of two panels, each showing eighteen confraternity members, located in the Akademie der bildenden Künste in Vienna (cat. nos. 2, 3 [*Katalog der Gemälde-Galerie* (Vienna: Verlag der Akademie, 1889)]). According to Ludwig's investigations in the Archivio di Stato in Venice (*Jahrbuch [der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses]* 22, no. 6: xv, no. 53), the paintings originally belonged to the Scuola dei Mercanti, near Madonna dell'Orto in Venice, and should be attributed to Domenico Tintoretto, although until recently they were unhesitatingly ascribed to Jacopo because of the superb handling of the heads. These paintings represent the most far-reaching and complete evolution of Venetian group portraiture. It is preceded, for example, by a painting that shows three *procuratori* of San Marco before the Madonna, hence, more or less parallel to the Memling paintings cited earlier with male and female hospital administrators. It is remarkable that this stage was reached so much later in the South than in the

Fig. 9. Domenico Tintoretto
Eighteen Confratelli of the Scuola dei Mercanti in Venice
Vienna, Akademie der bildenden Künste zu Wien

Fig. 10. Domenico Tintoretto
Eighteen Confratelli of the Scuola dei Mercanti in Venice
Vienna, Akademie der bildenden Künste zu Wien

North. In representations of this kind, the portraits are still directly connected with the devotional image; in figures 9 and 10, on the other hand, there are no holy figures at all. At the same time, it is also obvious that the panels are not complete in themselves, but are probably two wings once flanking a central devotional image, though we have no documentation for this. Even if there had been no central panel, however, the assumption would always have been that the viewer would imagine an object of devotion for the individuals portrayed on either side.

The pictorial conception of the confraternity portraits is similar to the one used for Scorel's Jerusalem pilgrims: the figures are united by a shared religious activity. The difference is that the Venetian arrangement is decidedly more severe and uniform: all of the participants kneel in regular rows, one behind the other, and all of the heads are turned in one and the same direction. In fact, on the left wing, all of the figures, with no exceptions, are looking out at the viewer; on the right wing, the gaze of about half of the men is straight ahead. The senior members of the group enjoy the most prominent places and are easily distinguished by their ermine-lined, red-velvet robes. In Holland, a long time would pass before officers were given such a dominant position relative to the other members of the guild.

Although the shared devotional activity of kneeling and praying creates internal coherence (a common act of worship) within the group, there is also no lack of external coherence with the viewing subject. On the left-hand wing, every single one of the heads is looking out at the spectator, moreover with a degree of consistency never found in earlier artists from Holland. It almost looks as though the confraternity members have fixed their gaze on a single viewing subject. On the right-hand wing, however, the direction of the gazes is divided. To modern eyes, this sets up an irresolvable conflict between the internal and external coherence of the painting, for the ones who are looking out at the viewer are obviously neglecting the shared devotional activity that is responsible for the internal coherence within the painting, while the ones who are engrossed in their praying are not in a position to make eye contact with the spectator to establish the external coherence with the viewer. This is a genuinely Baroque conflict. This did not trouble the Italians, however, but rather appealed to their artistic volition, which is why they never made any attempts to resolve it. In Holland, however, the search for a happy balance between internal and external coherence was central to all group portraiture.

My comments on composition will be brief. Generally, the credit Venetian artists are given for turning their attention to the free space between their figures (which is directly connected to their achievements in landscape painting) should be qualified in the way we have outlined for their no less important emancipation of an attentiveness based on mood. Let us simply say that the Venetians were not interested in depicting free space for its own sake, as Northern painters were, but only as a means of further setting off the haughty demeanor of the figures.

The confraternity members of both groups create a compact rectangle, set on an angle projecting into the foreground and bound by the diagonal ground-lines that are particularly characteristic of Tintoretto. Therefore, emphasis is placed on the fact that the figures occupy cubic space, and not on the free space. Nevertheless, Tintoretto makes the gaps between the figures much freer and airier than they would have been in a contemporary example of group portraiture from Holland; but, even so, for the modern viewer, it is still not clear how all the figures could find enough room to line up the way they do. Moreover, the space between the figures and the back wall is not made clear.

Flemish Group Portraiture

Group portraiture in the Southern Netherlands, which remained Catholic, also never developed beyond this preliminary stage. Even as late as the seventeenth century, the individuals are as a rule portrayed in a ceremonial painting, as in the examples cited by Herman Riegel in *Beiträge zur niederländischen Kunstgeschichte,* vol. 1 (on paintings of civic guards, see pages 142 f.; on paintings of regents, see pages 150 f.). The examples from the sixteenth century are, however, art historically more important. According to the information kindly supplied by Dr. Fortunat von Schubert-Soldern in Dresden, there are several of them in Bruges. One example is one of the wings of a triptych by Pieter Pourbus, dated 1559, in the Cathedral of Saint-Sauveur, which depicts thirteen members of the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament assisting at the Mass of Saint Gregory (reproduced in [J. de Coninck,] *Guide dans Bruges du touriste amateur d'art* [Bruges: J. Burghgraeve,] 1900). In this instance, none of the Brethren is looking at the spectator. The paintings that are closest to the Venetian examples by Tintoretto, on the other hand, are two group portraits in the Confrérie du Saint-Sang. In the *catalogue sommaire* of the Bruges exhibition of 1902 [*Expositions des primitifs flamands et d'art ancien*] under nos. 365 and 366, they are attributed to a Pourbus, though it is not certain which one. In this case, the portrait groups are now freed from any religious imagery, and the individual members look out toward the viewer with their hands folded in prayer.

The First Period of Group Portraiture in Holland, 1529–1566

The sort of corporation that the group portraiture of Holland required could only have emerged from the kind of officially incorporated groups whose members were willing to give up some of their own individuality and freedom in order to work together toward some collective, practical, secular, and public-spirited purpose. In the earliest stage of its evolution, civic guards fulfilled this requirement. They were not at all like the religious organizations associated with the preliminary stage of group portraiture, such as the Order of Saint John or the Brethren of the Holy Sepulcher. The main purpose of these groups, however lofty, was still essentially self-centered, because it was aimed primarily at acquiring eternal salvation for their members as individuals. Of course, at one time, in the very beginning, civic guards did have a certain religious basis. Not only that, but—as their enthusiasm for parrot-shooting indicates—they were not above self-centered goals, namely, entertainment. Their main purpose, however, was to band together and defend their fellow citizens against the common foe: it was this idea that formed the basis for the rise of a truly genuine form of group portraiture.

Nonetheless, some of the characteristics of the preliminary, religious stage of group portraiture lingered on throughout the entire first period. Several of them, in fact, were not even fully formed until then; some would not disappear completely until the beginning of the second period, when civic guards no longer had anything religious about them except the name of their patron saints. The works of this first period are, therefore, transitional: they represent a bridge between the religious art of the fifteenth century and the secular art of the seventeenth, at a time when the purely nonreligious forms of group portraiture, such as the anatomy lessons and regent group portraits, had yet to make their appearance. Only three guilds in Amsterdam were involved in commissioning group portraits during this period: the Kloveniersdoelen (musketeers' guild), the Voetboogsdoelen (crossbowmen's guild), and the Handboogsdoelen (longbowmen's guild).

The Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1529 by Dirk Jacobsz.
The earliest civic guard group portrait known today is generally, and rightly, thought to be by Dirk Jacobsz. It is dated 1529, stems from the Kloveniersdoelen, and is now located in the Rijksmuseum, no. 719 [now Rijksmuseum (hereafter RM) no. SK-C-402]. It consists of a wide central section (fig. 12),

plus two narrower wings (figs. 19, 20). Since the wings are presumably later additions, we will leave them aside until a more appropriate time and concentrate on the central section.

In this, the earliest civic guard group portrait, seventeen beardless male figures, wearing wide-brimmed caps, turn to look out at the viewer. The painting is divided by height into two levels, with eight figures above and nine below. The arrangement lengthwise is quite symmetrical: the heads of the lower figures (the front row) form a zigzag pattern, while the ones in the upper (back) row are aligned along a strict horizontal. The two rows are separated by a partition, something like a jury box, above whose railing the guardsmen in the back row appear as half-figures. Similarly, the figures of the lower row are covered below the hips by a partition with a railing that is, in turn, cut off by the lower edge of the painting. The partition serves as a background for the first row, while the back row is displayed against a dark, neutral wall. The actions of the figures are limited to a variety of hand gestures, which will be discussed in detail below.

Jacobsz.'s pictorial conception no longer relies on narrative to unify the painting. Geertgen still depended on the relic-discovery episode to tie the various figures in his group portrait together, while Scorel used the device of a procession toward the Holy Sepulcher to unite his pilgrims, and even in the later works, after the original idea had lost its meaning, continued to supply them with palm branches as symbolic reminders of their original participation in a pilgrimage. The shared action was eliminated, but a symbolic memory of it remained, in which every individual was equal but only to achieve a purely personal goal (eternal salvation).

The group portraiture of Holland could only develop its true form where each member of the group—while free to act autonomously—was nevertheless dedicated to the common good. Dirk Jacobsz.'s civic guard group portrait of 1529 is the first to fulfill this criterion. How Jacobsz. went about expressing this is already familiar to us from Scorel's paintings: physical action is used to express symbolism, while the integration of the figures on a psychological level is established by the fact that almost all of them are turned in the direction of the viewer. However, while there are still traces of a narrative treatment in Scorel's work, they are completely absent in Jacobsz.'s.

Let us first analyze the physical actions. In the lower row, two of the guardsmen clutch the barrels of their weapons (these were known as *couleuvrines* [culverins], hence the Dutch word for musketeer, *klovenier*). Now, if all the men were carrying muskets, the pictorial conception of the painting would be much closer to that of Scorel's, where each pilgrim carries a palm branch to symbolize the pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulcher. Because only two of the guardsmen carry weapons, there is a kind of division of labor.

The fourth man from the right in the lower row, the one directly beneath the date, is extending his hand, as though trying to catch the viewer's attention.[10] Four of his comrades, in turn, are pointing toward him, probably with the idea of singling him out for the viewer's benefit as their commander,

thereby introducing him to the viewer. In the upper right-hand corner, one of the men is holding up a quill for the viewer to see; this is presumably the secretary in charge of the company's correspondence. Furthermore, two of the men have placed their hands on the shoulders of the men positioned next to them, thus suggesting comradeship in a way so basic and so universally intelligible that it is already found in the family portraits of the ancient Egyptians.

Finally, in three instances the hands of the figures do nothing more than rest calmly on top of the railing. By calling attention to the complete lack of physical activity, by neutralizing the hands (the organs of grasping and appropriating things), the figures are totally absorbed in the purely psychological state of attentiveness. One could, therefore, describe this gesture as the negation of action, as a manifestation, so to speak, of nonactivity. The actions in the painting that do involve physical movement, however, are meant to symbolize the intimate comradeship based on community spirit that is enjoyed by the seventeen sitters. This type of pictorial conception, as we will see, is characteristic of the entire first period, which I call the symbolic period. That is why we will now devote a few words to its place in the larger evolution.

Symbolism requires the viewer to associate particular abstract qualities (in this case, community spirit) with the figures who possess the appropriate attributes. Today's artists would go about expressing this in a completely different way: the modern approach would be to show the guardsmen in a chance, momentary activity that was, however, representative of their community spirit. In other words, they would choose to paint either a genre painting or a history painting that has genre elements. Now, the symbolic type of pictorial conception characteristic of the early stage of group portraiture is, of course, much less evolved than the modern approach, but it is much more advanced than early Netherlandish history painting of the fifteenth century. This is especially evident when we think back to Geertgen's painting and the irreconcilable duality between the figures involved in the action and those looking on. In Jacobsz.'s civic guard group portrait, on the other hand, it is the viewing subject who establishes the important relationships, not only between the figures and himself or herself, but also between the figures within the painting as a whole. At the same time, however, symbolism contained the germ of genre painting, and later we will have to trace its evolution step by step. In general, this sixteenth-century, symbolic form of pictorial conception in group portraiture represented a necessary phase in the transition between the fifteenth and the seventeenth century.

Jacobsz.'s use of symbolism is more advanced than Scorel's in two important ways: one, there are more symbols—they had been quite limited in the elder artist's work—and more actions to go along with them; two, the introduction of subordination with the emphasis on the commander. The reliance on action and subordination, however, is characteristically Italian, and their appearance here makes it obvious that not only Scorel, the history painter from Utrecht who had been to Italy, but also Jacobsz., the local portrait

painter of Amsterdam's business community, considered a degree of Romanism vital to the advancement of the art of Holland in their day.

If one examines these innovations more closely, however, it is easy to see what is specific to Holland. For example, the actions of the figures are never self-contained, but always seem to be split, so to speak, into two parts, so that each of the active figures appears to be interacting with an invisible partner outside the painting. In Jacobsz.'s work, all but one of the figures are looking out toward the viewer who is always outside the image. Now, Scorel's pilgrims could afford to march along, serenely displaying their palm branches, in need of nothing and no one beyond this action to justify their existence. The purpose, however, of all the self-conscious gesturing by Jacobsz.'s guardsmen—whether it involves holding writing implements, singling out the leader, or expressing general camaraderie—is to communicate with a third party, or, better said, with an indefinite number of third parties, who are not in the picture and can only be assumed. This is the key to understanding group portraiture in Holland—though only as practiced in Amsterdam, because the same does not hold true for Haarlem. The various actions in the paintings are never really self-contained or complete in themselves: it is only in the mind of the viewer that they achieve the unity that holds them together.

This is beginning to sound something like our modern brand of subjectivism; however, one essential thing is missing: the singularity of the viewing subject. As we have seen several times before, the guardsmen are not focusing on one point, such as on a single pair of eyes; instead, they glance about over a wide area that could easily accommodate any number of viewers. In other words, the subject is still generalized and is not thought of as one individual. Sixteenth-century painting in Holland undeniably made considerable progress in the direction of modern pictorial ideas; at the same time, it would be wrong to underestimate the gap between then and now, which took centuries to bridge.

Furthermore, there is one major difference between this new form of subordination and that of Italian painting; namely, that none of the figures is acting in a way that would automatically single him out as the captain. We think we recognize him as the one directly beneath the date, because four of his comrades are pointing at him. Yet he is doing nothing more extraordinary than holding up his left hand in a rather reticent and ambiguous way. The gesture succeeds in attracting the viewer's attention to a certain extent, but it is not nearly enough to establish this guardsman's natural superiority over the others. His only distinction consists, therefore, in the pointing gestures of his four comrades. It is they who voluntarily set up the timidly gesturing guardsman as their commander and themselves as his subordinates. He makes no egoistic attempt to set himself apart from his fellows in any other way.

On a psychological level, Jacobsz.'s heads are not quite as individualized or as lifelike as those in Scorel's later paintings, but they do have more soulfulness. Jacobsz.'s guardsmen show no signs of physical prowess or great intellect that would lead them to want to dominate their surroundings either

physically or intellectually. On the contrary, they strike us as unassuming and well meaning; while not without dignity, they clearly accept the world as it is, respecting it and demanding the same respect for themselves in return.

The men in Jacobsz.'s civic guard group portrait of 1529 seem introspective, especially when compared to their comrades on the later wings, painted in the 1550s (figs. 19, 20), where the figures are more intensely lifelike. In this initial phase, attentiveness still largely operates within an ideal, elevated realm beyond space and time, as it did in Geertgen's case. In his earliest group portraits, Jacobsz. was still preoccupied with capturing an expression of inner composure; however, as Romanist influences grew in Holland, he eventually abandoned this.

An excellent example of a portrait that captures the interior, psychological life of the sitter is *Portrait of a Man* by Dirk Jacobsz. in the Imperial Gallery [now Kunsthistorisches Museum] in Vienna (fig. 11). It shows a half-length figure of a middle-aged, clean-shaven man behind a narrow tabletop, facing the viewer. He is chalking numbers on the table, presumably engaged in some sort of computation. However, the man is not looking down at what he is doing, but absently off into the distance. The eyes diverge and are not focused on a single, fixed point: a situation familiar to us from Geertgen's figures. As a result, they express a state of purely psychological activity, in this case, the act of calculating. The sword at the man's side contradicts the idea that he might be a merchant of some kind, so that the device of having him work out a calculation is purely artistic, functioning solely as the outward sign of inner, subjective processes. It is easy to understand why this motif became one of the most typical in all of Hollandish painting. Later it occurs over and over again, always with less and less emphasis on the physical action. The wine glass and apple are also worth mentioning: because they have nothing to do with the act of calculating, they also succeed in effectively counteracting any impression of physical action. This work, which is always attributed to Jacobsz. in old catalogs, shows the same narrow spectrum of colors in figure and clothing, the same neutral background, and the same tablelike surface in the foreground as the civic guard group portrait of 1529. Interestingly enough, the Vienna portrait incorporates the same date, written upside down in chalk on the left side of the table.

Let us now go back to the composition of Jacobsz.'s group portrait of 1529. The figures still consist of vertical axes that are not diagonally connected along a plane; like Geertgen's and Scorel's figures, they are held together entirely by horizontals. Jacobsz. was not content with a mere alignment of the men as separate, equal verticals, but arranged them symmetrically around a dominant center. The composition can therefore boast two new, Italian components: subordination and symmetry.

Let us look at how symmetry and subordination are applied to each of the two rows. The eight vertical axes of the upper level are rigidly lined up at about equal height, so that they look more or less boxed in between two horizontal lines. The fact that the two central figures are the tallest, and flanked

Fig. 11. Dirk Jacobsz.
Portrait of a Man
Vienna, Imperial Court Museum

Fig. 12. Dirk Jacobsz.
Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1529
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

on either side by slightly shorter neighbors, then, in turn, by slightly taller ones, and finally by their shortest colleagues, creates a gentle rhythm among the heads, though the viewer is unlikely to perceive this consciously. The center of the row is, of course, the empty interval between the middle two figures; it is, however, still accentuated by the four figures to either side who are turned concentrically toward the middle and each other. Consequently, the subordinating element, in this case, is nothing but empty space.

In contrast to this, the composition of the lower row is much more animated. Because there are nine figures, one of them occupies the central and therefore potentially dominant position. Quite characteristically, however, this figure is not the captain, as he surely would have been in a work based on subordination. More than that, however, Jacobsz. did everything he possibly could to press this central figure back into the ranks of his colleagues. Not only is his head noticeably shorter than those of his neighbors on either side, but these men overlap him to such an extent that only his head, a small bit of his chest, and one of his hands are visible. The desire to neutralize the potentially dominating position of the central figure is also expressed in the way his movements combine all three main directions: he turns his head toward the left, away from the viewer, but aims his eyes straight out in the viewer's direction, while he points toward the right with his raised right hand.

The groups of four to either side of this central figure differ in three respects from their counterparts in the upper row. First of all, although the upper bodies of all the figures are turned concentrically toward the middle, only three of the heads follow suit: one man on either side has turned his head in the opposite direction, while keeping his glance directed straight outward. This position is as artificial as the one assumed by the central figure, and is obviously a remnant of the medieval dualism discussed in the introduction [p. 76]. Secondly, the zigzag line that jumps from head to head is so lively that the viewer can hardly help noticing it. Two of the heads overlap the railing of the partition behind them; their caps extend into the upper row and, as a result, set up a definite physical relationship between the two rows. Thirdly, unlike their comrades above, who, despite some overlapping, essentially occupy one single plane, the guardsmen in the lower level are not lined up in a straight row. On the contrary, they clearly project and recede in space, so that, for example, the central figure, together with the two tallest men, make up the third and highest row (plane); furthermore, the heads in the lower row are larger and more strongly modeled than those in the upper row.

These differences in the way in which Jacobsz. handled the lower row create a greater impression of movement, yet at the same time they disturb the otherwise strict symmetry. Nevertheless, this disturbance is hardly more noticeable than the minute variation in the rhythm of the heads in the upper row, as noted above. For example, even though the highest points of the lines created by the figures' heads to either side of the central figure are not mirror images of each other, they do not really register as asymmetrical, because the shape created by the three outer figures on the right is repeated by the three

outer figures on the left. This seems to suggest that, even in the lower zone, the painter felt obliged to uphold a strictly symmetrical arrangement, the only difference being that, instead of harmonizing it figure by figure, he did it group by group.

This kind of composition is architectural in nature, for it resembles a two-storied facade articulated by a base, a subsidiary, and a main cornice. The components of the upper story, which can be thought of as pilasters, create a serene pattern of verticals and horizontals, with a definite emphasis on the latter. The components of the lower row, on the other hand, are in conflict with the whole: some of the vertical members have attempted to break through the constraints of the subsidiary cornice, while others struggle free from the wall and step out in front of each other, as first seen in the multiple pilasters of Michelangelo's courtyard in the Palazzo Farnese. Struggle below, constraint above, while symmetry succeeds in tying the whole facade together into a single, serene plane. This is basically the same architectural process that was taking place in Italy, starting with the vestibule of Michelangelo's Biblioteca Laurenziana. And what this means for us is that Jacobsz.'s civic guard group portrait, the earliest civic guard group portrait of all, is already part of the evolution taking place in Baroque art. Before we start to talk about stylistic qualities that point toward the future, however, let us take a closer look at a device that is still tied to the past, namely, the symmetry that is the basic organizational principle of Jacobsz.'s composition.

In a symmetrical arrangement, two objects have to correspond in height and width — the dimensions that define a plane. Symmetry, therefore, is tied to a plane: figures standing at different depths do not appear symmetrical. Depth, though, is the most subjective of the three dimensions: height and width are clearly evident from a single figure alone, whereas (cubic) depth (of solid bodies) has to be imagined. Finally, distances of depth (the effects of free space), at least in the case of figures that move, are completely dependent on the moment at which a viewing subject perceives them, whereas height and width are relatively stable and lasting values.

The kind of art that is preoccupied with representing self-contained, three-dimensional objects will naturally try to project those objects into a single plane, as evident in early sixteenth-century Italian Renaissance art. Because we now know that the group portraiture of Holland seized upon centralized symmetry around 1529, we can assume that it was the result of Romanism. The pattern is always the same: in order for figures to be integrated with the free space between them, they first have to be well-outlined, self-contained, solid shapes that are integrated with the other figures in a painting. All of this naturally results in figures with regular ("beautiful") contours, that is, contours that remain within a plane, and in compositions of no less regular groups with centralized, symmetrical arrangements.

By 1529 what the artists of Holland might have had to invent for themselves was already available and fully developed in Italian art. We do not know if Jacobsz. ever actually studied in Italy, but it would have been enough

for him to have gotten to know Italian art secondhand. At any rate, it is very unlikely that he arrived at a composition like the one in his earliest civic guard group portrait completely on his own, or that he came so close to approximating the Italian structural composition of the incipient Baroque style by sheer accident.

Despite all of these Romanist tendencies, however, the artist's Hollandish artistic volition still manages to triumph. This is true in regard to the pictorial conception, as we have already seen, and the same goes for the composition: the artist was concerned to tone down the absolute character of the subordination. Furthermore, he worked against symmetry in a plane by staggering the figures in free space and by exploiting the subjective aspect of composition that breaks down the plane, something that is really remarkable compared to what we find in Geertgen's and Scorel's works. Signs of this same tendency include the strong projection of the front-row figures into the foreground, as was pointed out earlier, as well as the stronger spatial presence of their heads relative to those in the upper row, which causes them to recede into space.

The two partitions, familiar to us from Scorel's group portraits, also serve to stagger the figures by overlapping the lower halves of their bodies. Further devices that create spatial effects are the hands jutting over the partitions: they are the successors (or, perhaps more accurately, the roughly contemporary counterparts) of the ones in Scorel's work. Yet another noteworthy detail is the wedge-shaped recess in the lower row that hints at a certain interest in grouping figures around a centralized space. This is a very timid version of the kind of spatial composition that Geertgen exploited in more developed form for his history painting of the relic-burning episode, though not, significantly, for the group portrait in the same painting. Both he and Scorel would have agreed that it was much too subjective for that genre.

The most significant indication of Jacobsz.'s intention to break up the plane and have figures recede in depth is how he handled the relationship between the figures and their surrounding space. He kept the background, which consists of little more than a neutral wall and the two partitions, intentionally dark, which makes the figures' skin stand out vividly, so that their heads and hands appear to be moving flexibly in space. Of course, this is not yet explicit spatial shadow like the chiaroscuro of seventeenth-century painting. Nevertheless, it is a clear move in the direction of treating free space as a coherent entity by giving it a single coloring, and thus to create an uninterrupted connection among the individual, self-contained figures. The final feature that contributes to the impression of space is the fact that the tops of their heads are not abruptly cut off, as they were in Scorel's painting, but still have room enough above their caps to avoid colliding with the frame.

So, just as subjective attentiveness—the component of group portraiture specific to Holland—grew stronger rather than weaker after the introduction of the objectivist, Romanist expressive devices of symbolism and subordinating action to the pictorial conception, the same was true of composition: the

introduction of central symmetry was accompanied by an increased emphasis on free space. This first period of group portraiture, which can be thought of as the symbolic-symmetrical phase, was obviously receptive to Romanism, but only when it served artistic goals specific to Holland, with the result that it led to unmistakable advances in achieving these goals.

During this period, there are still no instances where two figures interact with each other on a psychological level. All of the guardsmen in Jacobsz.'s painting look out of the painting toward where a viewer would convention-ally stand, with one important exception: the man to the extreme left of the lower row who gazes off at an acute angle almost parallel to the picture plane. However, he is definitely not interacting with any of his comrades. Like the rest of them, he is looking out beyond the frame; the direction of his gaze sim-ply does not happen to be where one would normally expect the viewer.

An impressive number of civic guard group portraits survive from the early 1530s. Thus it is tempting to assume that group portrait commissions had become commonplace by then, and that it is only an accident that Jacobsz.'s painting of 1529 is the sole survivor of earlier date. At first glance, however, it is clear that these works have an unsteady and uncertain pictorial conception that is most easily explained by their being products of artists inexperienced in the newfound type of painting commission and still groping for appropriate expressive means. Of course, no one would try to insist that Jacobsz.'s civic guard group portrait of 1529 must be the very earliest of its kind, but the beginnings of group portraiture in Amsterdam cannot have been much earlier than this.

The Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1531 by an Unknown Artist

The civic guard group portrait by an unknown artist, no. 1332 [RM no. SK-C-409] in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 13), dates from just two years later than Jacobsz.'s. The catalog formerly attributed it to Scorel, but now, following Six, it is ascribed to Cornelis Teunissen, one of whose authenticated works, of 1533, we will be dealing with next. In my opinion, the figures' pudgy, round heads are too uniform and too compact to be by either artist. If I were forced to choose between the two, however, I would pick Scorel, because, in my opinion, the painting's pictorial conception owes more to the thinking of a history painter than to that of a professional portrait painter. At first, in fact, it even looks like a history painting, and only someone familiar with civic guard traditions, who knows that the A in the coat of arms in the middle of the railing stands for Squad A of the Kloveniersdoelen, would immediately recognize it as a group portrait. Further clues supporting that assumption include the inscriptions, to which we will come in due course, and, lastly, the portrait quality of some of the physiognomy.

Remarkably enough, there are also seventeen men in this painting, just as there had been in Jacobsz.'s painting of 1529. Since, furthermore, both group portraits were commissioned by the same Kloveniersdoelen, it is conceivable that the same individuals appear in both paintings. Unfortunately, Jacobsz.'s

Fig. 13. Anonymous
Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1531
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

work does not indicate the squad's letter; moreover, the portrait quality of the heads in the later work is so poor that it would be impossible to confirm with any degree of certainty whether any of them are identical in both paintings. The guardsmen in the later painting are generally younger than those in the earlier one; so for this reason alone, it is unlikely that the two groups are identical.

Now, let us investigate how this unknown artist of 1531, who obviously did not measure up to either Scorel or Jacobsz. as a portrait painter, conceived and composed his civic guard.

The guardsmen here do not wear civilian clothing but are dressed in armor, though without headgear; with one or two exceptions, they all hold muskets by their sides in the position of parade rest. In a way reminiscent of Scorel's palm branches, all of this serves to emphasize the military nature of the association much more clearly than in Jacobsz.'s portrait, and also makes us suspect that it might depict a specific historical episode. This impression is strengthened by the way our anonymous artist carefully differentiated between active and passive participants, just as Geertgen had in his painting of the Knights of Saint John. In Jacobsz.'s painting, on the other hand, nearly all of the guardsmen are active, and the few exceptions still manage to maintain lively eye contact with the viewing subject who unifies the whole.

Fourteen of the guardsmen in the painting of 1531 stand quietly at parade rest, while the remaining three, prominently located in the foreground near the two inscriptions, are gesturing with their hands. The one on the left, whose head is visible only in profile, reaches forward with both hands as if in a gesture meant to accompany speech. His two counterparts on the opposite side gaze out toward the viewer as one places his right hand on the other's chest, and the other reaches for his colleague's right arm. Locked in a symbolic act of fraternity, they face the third, gesticulating figure who seems to be speaking a few words for the occasion. Meanwhile, the other fourteen men — just like the knights in Geertgen's painting — assist silently and passively.

The inscriptions substantiate this interpretation. The one on the right consists of a Latin quotation from Seneca and the date 1531; the one on the left is its Dutch translation: "*Wij zijn door deezen plechtighen eed verbonden de wereldsche zaken gheduldig te verdraaghen en ons niet te laaten beroeren door die zaaken die wij niet in onse macht hebben om te vermijden.*" (We are bound by this firm oath to bear worldly events with patience and not to be moved by those things that we cannot avoid.) This confirms that all present are members of a sworn fellowship and that the three active figures are involved in a swearing-in ceremony. The reference in the inscription to unavoidable fate and the inclusion of two angels in the upper right corner are the only remnants of the religious basis that the association once had.

We now have to ask whether the artist originally intended to represent an actual historical episode — say, the swearing-in of a particular new recruit — as was the case with Geertgen's and Scorel's paintings, or whether it was meant in a purely symbolic way, more akin to Jacobsz.'s group. It quickly becomes clear that the psychological coherence of the seventeen figures portrayed in

the scene is completely dependent on the artist's use of objective symbolism: the two men whose arms are resting on each other are not looking across to their active colleague but out at the viewer. He, in turn, is not looking back at them — though he is shown in profile — but upward, in a direction where none of his fellows could possibly be standing. One is led to conclude that this artist, too, sought to establish through objective symbolism the psychological unity of the seventeen portrait figures. The symbolism is less developed here than in Jacobsz.'s work only because, like Scorel's portraits, it revolves essentially around a single situation. Not immediately apparent is the fact that most of the figures are not looking out in the direction of a viewer (strictly speaking, at this point, one must assume a multitude of viewers), but staring vaguely toward the middle of the painting. None of them, however, shows the least interest in the swearing-in ceremony itself.

Our anonymous artist begins to emerge as someone relatively behind the times who persisted in thinking that the medieval pictorial conception of history painting could solve the new problems presented by group portraiture; at the same time, he was unable to resist the trend toward greater symbolism. As a result, his pictorial conception is much closer to that of Scorel than to that of Jacobsz., though not close enough to justify an attribution.

Now let us take a look at some of the specific devices that the anonymous artist used to realize his conception. What distinguishes the composition of his work from that of Jacobsz. is primarily that the figures are posed in a landscape. The surroundings that open up behind the figures thus become significant in themselves, and this emancipation of the surrounding space is another clear sign of the growing subjectivism of the period. Netherlandish painters had already reached this stage of the evolution in composition by the fifteenth century. They placed the sitter in the foreground as a half-length figure and then, by means of perspective in free space, allowed the landscape to recede into infinity, becoming less and less distinct. The figures in the foreground, however, have no real connection with the distant background, because the middle ground is all but nonexistent. In the fifteenth century, figure and space were still dualistically disjointed, even though artists had begun to explore the particular qualities of each separately. Italian artists were much better at balancing and integrating the two at this point, although they relied almost exclusively on linear perspective which gives priority to the figure. Therefore, Northern artists who were looking for ways of subjectively uniting and integrating figure and space looked to Italy for models. Jacobsz.'s civic guard group portrait is a perfect example of a transitional work with obvious Italian influence.

Once again, however, the civic guard group portrait of 1531 is less advanced than Jacobsz.'s work in this respect, because the relationship between figure and space is still as disjointed and dualistic as it was in Memling's day. Of course, there was not much space visible in Jacobsz.'s group portrait to begin with, but that is why it was so much easier to make it look convincing. Unlike those in the van Eycks' paintings, the landscape in the painting of 1531

already has two gradations — a brown and a green one — to indicate depth. Taken together with the row of figures in the foreground, furthermore, we have the well-known layered, three-toned landscape formula. This way of systematically creating the illusion of spatial depth undoubtedly has a subjective effect, but it was nothing new in 1531. Flemish artists later turned the stripes of isolated colors into an objective, standardized formula. The Hollanders, on the other hand, went beyond that by blending the three layers with each other, mainly using the perspective of free space, and hence doing away with the isolating, polychromatic effect.

Finally, the landscape is made up of fantastic, jagged, toothlike cliffs topped by the rugged ruins of crenelated towers. How fundamentally different are these pinnacles, straining toward heaven — these remnants of waning Gothic sensibility — familiar to us from Joachim Patinir and Herri met de Bles — from the weighty horizontal line pressing down upon the heads of the upper row of figures in Jacobsz.'s civic guard group portrait! Apparently, the artist of 1531 was perfectly happy with the degree of spatial subjectivity that had been achieved in the fifteenth century and the first two decades of the sixteenth, and he had no desire to go beyond it. Of course, had he looked to Italy for models, he would have found them only for the figures and not for the landscape. At any rate, the solution he found for relating the portraits and the landscape was just as antiquated and out-of-date as his way of reducing symbolism to history painting.

The composition of the figures, however, does represent a rare instance where an artist from Holland decided not to stack rows of figures on top of each other, but to arrange them behind each other. Sixteen of the men are lined up in four vertical, receding rows of four men; the seventeenth man is located in the exact middle. Clearly, the rules of Italian linear perspective were being used, though in an awkward and inaccurate way; it is another example of Romanist thinking. Linear perspective allowed the artist to align all seventeen heads along a horizon line which then served to link all the vertical axes into a unified series. Consequently, in spite of the fact that the figures project and recede in space, they are still forced into a plane.

The symmetry is quite strict and oriented to a dominant center. Yet the figure occupying the central position is placed deep into the picture, so that his position is anything but prominent. Furthermore, with the exception of his head, he is almost completely masked by his neighbors. Again, external subordination is stripped of any internal significance.[11] This centralized symmetry is repeated, with mathematical precision, on the railing of the partition below; in the landscape, it is somewhat less exact, but still clearly emphasized. With few exceptions, the sixteen figures in the four rows are arranged symmetrically and concentrically. Almost all of them are strictly vertical; some of their glances still suffer the traces of dualism. As with Jacobsz.'s guardsmen, there is a wedge-shaped free space in the foreground tapering up toward the central figure: it has the effect of counteracting the planar effect of the symmetry and of awakening in the viewer a subjective sense of depth.

The civic guard group portrait of 1529 can be fairly described as two strictly separated horizontal levels of vertical components, whereby the lower ones are moving along the dimensions of height and depth (forward) in contrast to the upper ones that rest serenely along the width. If so, then an analysis of the composition of the portrait of 1531 might sound something like this: a row of half-length figures, projecting into the foreground in units of four, rises above a serene horizontal base to terminate above in another horizontal line. After this comes the landscape: first, a brown strip, which breaks up into broad zigzags; then, a green one, whose sharp points reach up to the upper edge of the frame. In the lower part, the composition rests calmly along the entire width of the painting; in the upper part, it is straining frantically upward in height.

In other words, the upper zone reflects Northern Gothic principles, while the lower zone incorporates the Italian Baroque ones we discovered in use by Jacobsz., even though only a single line of figures is involved. In the way the artists treated the figures, however, the reverse seems to be true: here the figures, both individually and as a group, have stressed, compact contours, whereas Jacobsz.'s figures are physically more relaxed and psychologically deeper.

The Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1533 by Cornelis Teunissen

There is a civic guard group portrait (fig. 14), dated 1533 and signed by the artist Cornelis Teunissen, that has not yet been removed to the Rijksmuseum but is still in Amsterdam City Hall.[12] Again, the men are seventeen in number; this time, however, they are members of the Voetboogsdoelen. And again, the letter of the squad appears in the middle of the bottom of the painting.

The most striking thing about this work is that most of the men are seated around a table set with food and drink. Standing behind them, along a back wall interrupted by a window, are seven more men. Because of its unifying action, Teunissen's work is closer in pictorial conception to the portrait of 1531 than to that of 1529. Teunissen has simply substituted the idea of the banquet for the swearing-in ceremony.

On closer examination, however, it is immediately apparent that none of the banqueters has any interest whatsoever in eating or drinking. And this is true not only for the men standing along the wall, but even for the ones seated directly at the table. Though each of the seated men has a plate set before him, no one seems inclined to eat, and the only person holding a knife shows no sign of putting it to its proper use. In addition, though one man is holding a wineglass, and another a tankard of beer, no one shows any intention of taking a drink. These few details make it obvious that this meal was not meant to represent something from the daily life of these guardsmen, such as a disinterested viewing subject might have been able to witness at a particular moment in time. Like the swearing-in ceremony, it is meant to fulfill a symbolic, aesthetic goal. The idea of a banquet serves this purpose very well—so well, in fact, that it remains in use well into the seventeenth century. The

Fig. 14. Cornelis Teunissen
Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1533
Amsterdam, City Hall

inclusion of drinking vessels is particularly popular; obviously, they refer to
the custom of sealing the bond of brotherhood with a drink.

Although the pictorial conception of Teunissen's group portrait is closer to
that of the civic guard group portrait of 1531, his use of symbols is more like
Jacobsz.'s. For Teunissen, the larger symbol of the banquet was not enough,
and he ended up competing with Jacobsz. in the number and variety of sym-
bols. He showed the men touching each other, pointing at each other, and
holding up a writing implement. The crossbow, the characteristic weapon of
the Voetboogsdoelen, occurs only twice, in both cases held by men standing
along the back wall. The way the one on the left is loading a bolt into his
crossbow with a momentary, subjective movement is really quite remarkable.
Of course, he is not actually concentrating his attention on the crossbow
itself; as is typical of the period, the action is frozen halfway. Another man is
seated at the table holding a sheet of music: his head is turned to the side at a
very odd angle, as though to assure the viewer that he has no intentions what-
soever of singing from that sheet. Given more time with the original work,
and more information about the customs of the militia, one could probably
come up with many more symbolic meanings for the various actions of the
figures than is possible for me from the photograph that I have to work from.

The officers here are even less identifiable than in the other two paintings.
A potential candidate for captain is the portly gentleman in the fur cap hold-
ing a tray of three glass bowls: one neighbor is touching his arm, while
another is pointing to him. His credentials, however, depend strictly on the
analogy with Jacobsz.'s work, for otherwise he does not dress or behave any
differently from the others.

In contrast to Jacobsz.'s painting, however, only a few of the figures here
look out at the spectator, for Teunissen was much more interested in varying
the direction of his figures' gazes than Jacobsz. was. The only place the figures
never look is directly at each other. And the reason Teunissen could afford to
neglect the coherence of the situation within the painting is because he knew
he could rely on the imagination of the viewer outside the painting to unify the
scene and make sense of it. Teunissen's viewer, however, is even farther away
from the modern idea of a single, specific individual standing in a centralized
position in front of a work of art than Jacobsz.'s was. He must have been able
to imagine anywhere from one to a thousand viewers distributed around the
full 180 degrees in front of the picture surface. Some of the banqueters are still
shown in profile, as they were in the quasi–history painting of 1531, and
therefore look out at angles virtually parallel to the picture plane. This is
Teunissen's way of assuring the viewer that each member of the group is self-
reliant and uninterested in any form of interaction with his other comrades.

The composition seems very symmetrical at first. Unlike the previous
painting, however, it has no dominant center. Symmetry is most strictly
observed at the bottom of the painting, where, instead of a railing, the edge of
the tablecloth on the table extends down to the picture surface, perpendicular
to the viewer. The squad's identifying letter[13] is in the exact center of the table;

to the right and left are white strips of linen. Finally, one person is seated in either corner, both dressed in dark costumes.

The subjective qualities of Teunissen's arrangement become obvious when his banqueters' table is compared with the rigidly symmetrical railing in the foreground of 1531. The tablecloth in the banquet scene falls in asymmetrical folds, and the lines that separate the dark corner areas from the white surface do not exactly match on both sides. The same is true of the tabletop, which, because of the high viewpoint, has more visible surface than might otherwise be expected. Granted, the large, oval platter with the roasted bird marks a strong central emphasis; however, the balance between the plates, loaves, and vessels to either side is really very casual.

Going on to the figures, here we find none of the crossbowmen occupying the dominant, central position, even though the vertical axes of six of them form a horizontal band at the head of the table, with two to either side. Nor did the artist opt for the concentric arrangement familiar to us from the upper row of Jacobsz.'s civic guard group portrait of 1529 that could have compensated for this missing center, namely, where the men are turned slightly toward each other. Not only are the figures at the center of the composition directing their attention in various eccentric directions, but even among the outermost figures on the narrow sides of the painting, who ought to be functioning as a frame to close off the painting to the outside, there is one (at lower left) who twists conspicuously outward. This represents a remarkable deviation from objective artistic principles.

The row of standing figures does make some concessions to symmetry in that both of the outermost men have roughly the same short stature, while their companions gradually increase in height toward the middle. However, it is precisely the central area that is so unresolved: the men on the left do not balance out at all with the ones on the right, while the window is noticeably shifted left of center. Irresistibly, the viewer's attention follows this shift to the left where the center of gravity is located. The reason for this is not obvious at first, but, after closer inspection, we quickly realize that Teunissen clearly intended to lead the viewer subjectively though the painting from left to right, and did all he could to avoid presenting the banquet to the viewer as an objective, centralized scene.

The deviation from symmetry begins in the lower sections. We have already noted how the figure in the left-hand corner stands out because he looks backward and outward. Now we can compare him with the indifferent figures seated in profile on the other end of the table, in order to appreciate just how extraordinary a figure he is. The projection of the table, made obvious by the white tablecloth, is crucial. The orthogonals created by the small ends of the table recede into space at unequal angles in respect to the viewer: on the left side, the corner of the tabletop is nearly a right angle; hence, the orthogonal is parallel to the viewer's gaze. The right corner, however, is an acute angle. Unquestionably, the standpoint of the viewing subject was assumed to be somewhat left of center. The line of sight would then fall directly on the

figure whom we suspected to be the captain, and then travel up the central mullion of the window. It is important to note in this context that the putative captain and his neighbor to the left are both looking out at the viewer, whereas their table mates gaze off in all sorts of other directions. In fact, instances where a figure is looking straight ahead are rare. All in all, the composition of Teunissen's group portrait is a remarkable attempt to intensify the subjective experience of the painting; and this is precisely what we have already observed to be true of the pictorial conception.

Also noteworthy is the increased illusion of depth. At first, the conventional arrangement of the figures in rows—where one row is on top of the other instead of one behind the other—makes the spatial composition seem more antiquated than Jacobsz.'s, and especially more so than in the portrait of 1531, which seemed to avoid any vertical juxtaposition of heads. The compositional device of a wedge-shaped space inserted into the foreground, by contrast, which until now reflected only the earliest stages of composition based on a self-contained spatial center, has now been developed into an actual ring of figures seated around a common center, interrupted only on the side facing the viewer. Moreover, Teunissen made the spatial center—namely, the table—so large and prominent that the viewer cannot possibly ignore it. In later paintings of banquets, as we will see, the table is generally much smaller and simpler. Other artists realized that it was not advantageous to the portrait quality to have a secondary object like a table competing for attention with the faces of the sitters, which is exactly what happens in this scene from 1533. In this earliest known example of a composition with a full-fledged spatial center, the artist has gone out of his way to make its novel effects as drastic as possible. And, as a matter of fact, if the figures were not seated so closely together, and if there were not a row of figures standing behind them, then the viewer would indeed get a more comfortable feeling of space.

The wall behind the row of standing figures does not extend much higher than to the tops of their heads. Like Jacobsz., Teunissen obviously decided upon a weighty horizontal line to finish off the top part of the composition, as opposed to the open landscape in the background of the 1531 portrait. Unlike Jacobsz.'s back wall, however, Teunissen's is not uniformly neutral, and we are reminded in a number of ways of its function as a solid, enclosing surface. First of all, a rectangular piece of paper bearing the date and the artist's signature is fastened to the upper left-hand corner of the room. The corners of the paper project slightly from the surface of the wall to cast a shadow; in other words, they create the illusion of empty space with no figures. Then, in the upper right-hand corner is a round mirror, something like the one in Jan van Eyck's family portrait of the Arnolfini in the National Gallery in London. Unfortunately, I cannot see it clearly enough to determine whether it, too, like its celebrated predecessor, reflects an image. Finally, as mentioned earlier, there is the broad, two-part window. Because the window is closed, the interior appears to be bounded to the rear; through the pane, however, one looks out on a landscape, though unfortunately the reproduc-

tion lacks clarity of detail. The space behind the left pane goes off into infinity, in the traditional way, without any connection to the foreground. Behind the right pane, however, one sees dark masses, which if they are rocks would give the same sense of space as the other half, while if they are trees would seem to move into the intervening space. In any case, Teunissen created the illusion of deep recession by setting up various layers leading back into space, thus forcing the viewer to look first at the table with the figures standing behind it, then at the wall with the window, and, finally, out at the landscape. Therefore, it is the artist's layering of spatial planes that is responsible for the illusion of spatial recession, although his prominent placement of the table shows that he was also very much concerned with unifying and centralizing the space.

Let us conclude with a discussion of the heads. The light falling on the faces is still fairly uniform, although there are a few instances of stronger contrasts of light and dark, as with the man holding the crossbow in the upper right. Once again, the light falls from the left, and this is painstakingly reflected in the cast shadows: not only does the raised tankard held by the man on the right-hand side — the second one in from the front plane — cast a definite shadow on the tablecloth, but his extended finger does as well. Cast shadows, however, even when they are no longer simply used for modeling surfaces, still remain shadows of solid objects, because they reproduce the contours of the objects in the form of a silhouette. This is not the only instance in art history where the use of cast shadows occurs together with a basic reluctance to depict space; the same was true in antiquity. Spatial shadows, too, are ultimately a function of what happens when light is blocked by solid objects, but they differ from cast shadows in that there is no emphasis on the size and shape of the solid object obstructing the light. Teunissen's painting has fewer spatial shadows than Jacobsz.'s, where we were able to observe a hint of the unifying effect of chiaroscuro to come.

We have now examined three group portraits painted between 1529 and 1533, each of which is quite different from the others, and each of which was produced by an artist who was trying to solve, in his own way, the unfamiliar problem of group portraiture. It would be a good idea now to pause and compare these three solutions. First, let us see what they have in common, then, what distinguishes one from the other, and, finally, what general pattern seems to be emerging.

What all three works share, both in pictorial conception and composition, is an underlying dualism of the objective and the subjective. Objectivism is reflected in the use of symbolism in the pictorial conception and the use of symmetry in the composition. Subjectivism, on the other hand, is associated with the expression of attentiveness in the pictorial conception and an increased feeling of space in the composition.

As far as symbolism is concerned, the painting of 1531 is the most restrained, because there is only one symbol involved, namely, the oath-taking ceremony, and only three of the seventeen figures take an active part. Teunissen,

on the contrary, went overboard with his use of symbols. Even though the way he set the banquet table might have been enough to suggest the fraternal banquet, he did not stop there, but made the men hold a variety of other objects related to the idea of feasting, as well as a number of additional symbols. Jacobsz.'s musketeers stand somewhere in the middle between these two extremes, for, though they are in possession of a respectable number of symbols, no single one of them demands the participation of *all* the parties at the same time, as the oath-taking ceremony or the banquet did. And since one of the basic requirements of a successful portrait is a certain autonomy for the sitter or sitters, it seems that in this respect Jacobsz. is the most competent portrait artist of the three.

Both the artist of the 1531 portrait and Teunissen introduced ideas into portrait painting that seem contradictory to its purpose, though precisely because they were both looking for the kind of pictorial conception that would allow them to integrate their figures into a tightly knit group. It is important to distinguish between the two of them, however, as each represented a different direction, not only with respect to Jacobsz., but also with respect to each other. The artist of 1531 was experimenting with the idea of oath taking, an activity that is not genuinely a historical event because it would have occurred not just once but repeatedly in the lives of these men; unless, that is, it shows the swearing-in of one particular guardsman, a hypothesis that is undocumented and intrinsically unlikely. In itself, the oath-taking ceremony has the potential of becoming a genre theme: however, the seriousness and religious solemnity of the event, as the painting makes clear in the ceremony and the almost motionless passivity of the onlookers, places the portrait squarely on the borderline between history and genre painting.

Teunissen's painting, on the other hand, already has the attributes of a genre scene. A banquet is something that would have occurred over and over again in the lives of these men, and, in spite of its basic seriousness and symbolic significance, all of the characteristics are quite ordinary, the kind that would have been familiar to everyone from many other occasions, and indeed from everyday life. Teunissen saw to it that there was no lack of such characteristics. In fact, the only thing that distinguishes his banquet from a true genre painting is the fact that he failed to make the situation one of cause and effect. We see the men behaving in an everyday manner, but we do not know the (momentary) cause of their behavior, because this lies outside the picture. The men never look at each other, nor, if they happen to be holding anything, at these objects; instead, they are intent on something unseen. All of them are engaged in some sort of mundane activity, but none of these activities is complete in itself, because all of them are aimed at something outside the actual picture space: namely, the ideal viewing subject.

If we stop and think for a moment about which pictorial conception best serves the needs of the portrait, we would probably immediately agree upon Jacobsz.'s. The rounded heads in the quasi–history painting of 1531 are the most generic, and they also have less psychological depth than one tends to

expect from Hollandish portrait heads. As for the heads in Teunissen's paint-
ing, they cannot really be called generic; Teunissen was obviously an astute
observer. Nevertheless, because he has the disconcerting habit of turning the
heads of his figures in many directions, they tend to lose something of their
individuality and especially of their psychological character. As a result,
several of the heads, including the one we suspected was the captain's, have
expressions that—far from reflecting such qualities as attentiveness and
whole-hearted openness to the outside world—look as though they are pri-
marily consumed by their creature comforts.

By contrast, what a pleasure it is to look at Jacobsz.'s portrait heads, where
everything is centered around the expression of the eyes, and to a certain
extent around the mouth! How eloquently the hands—already admired in his
own day[14]—seem to "speak," particularly when they are compared to their
fleshy, mute counterparts in Teunissen's work. Jacobsz.'s figures give us the
impression that they are genuinely free agents, with no need to strike a suc-
cession of varied poses in order to prove that they are not all engaged in a
shared, momentary action. As a result, there is nothing to distract them from
maintaining steady eye contact with the viewer, which also goes to support
the unity of the painting. And it will come as no surprise that Jacobsz.'s pic-
torial conception, though not of course unchanged, served as a model for
many later artists well into the seventeenth century. It perhaps represents the
most genuine pictorial conception of Holland, and certainly at least the one
specific to Amsterdam. On the other hand, Teunissen's pictorial conception
was adopted by those painters who preferred using the means of genre paint-
ing to unify their group portraits, and who later became prominent notably in
Haarlem. We will be following the subsequent evolution of these two concep-
tual alternatives over the next century: how they first coexisted side by side,
then gradually intermingled, and finally became united in Rembrandt's *Staal-
meesters* in a way that has never been surpassed.

The objective compositional device—planar symmetry—is most strictly
observed by the artist of the painting of 1531, least strictly by Teunissen, and,
once again, Jacobsz.'s solution is somewhere in between. What distinguishes
one from the other is the degree to which each artist allows his subjective feel-
ing for space to enter into the composition; and this brings us to a discussion
of the subjective aspects of our three group portraits.

The subjective element of the pictorial composition is found in attentive-
ness as such. The figures do not simply stand objectively with their symbols,
that is, each isolated with respect to the viewer, as would have been the case
in antiquity, but instead they express themselves by clearly revealing their
attentiveness. Following a now familiar pattern, this expressive possibility is
least exploited in the piece from 1531, most enthusiastically by Teunissen,
and only to a moderate extent by Jacobsz. And again, it is this intermediate
position between the two extremes that makes Jacobsz. the most successful
portrait painter of the three in regard to this vital component of Northern
portraiture. The attentiveness of Jacobsz.'s figures results mainly from the

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intimate familiarity of the glance. In Teunissen's, it is primarily expressed through physical movements, in the turning of torsos, heads, eyes. To be sure, such gestures were also found in Jacobsz., but they were used sparingly, and, what is more, in a forced way that makes it seem as though each of their parts—torso, head, and eyes—was following its own impulse. In Teunissen's painting, on the other hand, the movement is far more unified: at least the eyes usually correspond to the orientation of the head, so that they no longer suffer from the artificial eye contortions still afflicting several of Jacobsz.'s guardsmen in the lower row. Once again, Teunissen turns out to be the most advanced of the three artists, while Jacobsz. retains his position as the most conscientious portrait painter.

In the approach to space, we find the same relationship among the three artists. Once again, the anonymous artist of 1531 is the most conservative. Even though he included more landscape in his portrait than the others did, it tends to function more like a symbol: it lacks a persuasive connection to the figures. Moreover, there is nothing else in the painting that could convince the viewer that the guardsmen are standing in the open air: not even one of them is allowed to rest his hand on the foreground railing as a way of helping the viewer locate them in space. Though the figures are arranged perpendicular to the viewer in perspectival rows, something that his two colleagues did not even attempt to do, he also arranged them more strictly within a single plane. And he left the spatial center in the middle of his squad so underdeveloped that, at least by modern standards, it is almost totally ineffective.

Teunissen did just the opposite. He made a conscious attempt to relate figures and space. First, he created an enormous spatial center in the form of the table, and then set up a graduated succession of spatial layers that connect, step by step, the row of figures, the wall, the window, and finally the landscape with its infinite space beyond. Here, we are truly conscious of the fact that we are in an enclosed space with enough room to accommodate a large table. It is disturbing, however, that the table is as large as it is, and that the figures between the table and the wall are so cramped for space. However, it reveals a lot about Teunissen's approach, namely, that he put all his efforts into developing an impressive spatial center—which, on a certain level, begins to seem as substantial as a solid body—and completely neglected the free space circulating around the solid objects themselves.

As discussed earlier, this same approach was taken by the Italians, a clear indication that it was not only Jacobsz. who found he had to come to terms with Mannerism, but Teunissen as well: it was simply something that all artists of that period sooner or later had to deal with. On the surface, Teunissen's work looks less obviously Mannerist, at least in the narrower sense, because, even though the figures have more freedom of movement overall, they still maintain their strictly vertical, upright positions for the sake of the portrait quality and shy away from the diagonals and foreshortenings that gradually began to overrun other contemporary Netherlandish history painting. Nevertheless, the basic tendency was still the same, and the more

integrated movements of Teunissen's figures, which we have duly praised (especially in regard to the man with the sheet of music), may even constitute a direct response to the Italian example.

Finally, Jacobsz. was much more moderate in his approach to space than Teunissen. Still, he, too, wanted to do something about the lack of integration between figure and space that had been characteristic of earlier Netherlandish art and that we still find in the artist of 1531. What he did, then, was to reduce the space to a minimum in order to make it easier to relate to the figures. Only a small bit of wall and two partitions are visible. In one case, in fact, only the railing of the partition is visible, but the figures support themselves on it, which helps to clarify the spatial context, though it is by no means obvious. Jacobsz. was also working with the idea of a wedge-shaped spatial center, though it does not have anything like the central emphasis it has in Teunissen.

To conclude from what we have observed thus far, the general tendency seems to be heading in a subjective direction. Artists are interested in solving the problems involved with relating figures physically to the surrounding space and psychologically to the outside world. It was natural that they should pursue this goal at first through external, drastic, obvious means. Such means affect only solid objects: increased overlapping (later also foreshortening), animated body positions, and spatial centers with material bodies. These are aspects, however, that detract from the portrait quality, and, therefore, it is not surprising that portrait painters had reservations about committing themselves to the artistic mainstream of their day. The portrait painter who knew how to steer a moderate course between backward-looking objectivity and forward-looking subjectivity was the one to carry the day. Even by the standards of modern taste, from all that we have seen, that painter was obviously Dirk Jacobsz. The people of Amsterdam at that time were apparently of the same opinion, because the only two dated civic guard group portraits that are known to have survived from this early period of group portraiture in Amsterdam, aside from the ones already mentioned, are associated with his name: one is undoubtedly a work of his hand, while the other is strongly influenced by him. That means that Jacobsz.'s pictorial conception was employed three times within the five-year time span between 1529 and 1534, which no doubt goes to show that the public found his solution to the new problems in group portraiture the most satisfying. To jump ahead somewhat, I can say that the idea was still popular as late as the 1550s.

The Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1532 by Dirk Jacobsz.
A group portrait of seventeen guardsmen of the Kloveniers' guild (fig. 15), bearing Jacobsz.'s signature and the date 1532, is now in the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg (along with another work by him that will be discussed later). The provenance of both of these works remains somewhat mysterious, and it has only been a few years since Six made their whereabouts generally known.[15] This time, the men are not in an interior but outdoors, thus making this portrait doubly interesting, because we will be able to

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Fig. 15. Dirk Jacobsz.
Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1532
Saint Petersburg, Hermitage

observe how Jacobsz. went about solving this new spatial problem using his now familiar approach.

The pictorial conception in particular is exactly the same as that of 1529, since Jacobsz. makes no attempt to engage the group in any sort of unified activity, neither in the style of history painting nor of genre painting. Only the symbolic gesturing with fingers and hands serves to tie the figures together as a group, and these have decreased appreciably in number, although purely circumstantial factors may have played a role in this. For example, the out-door setting, lacking the partitions of the earlier interior, may have been the reason for the crowded, overlapped arrangement that leaves no room for a comfortable display of the hands of the men in the two back rows. It would have been too awkward if all the men were holding up their hands around the heads of the colleagues in front of them, as the one musketeer on the right-hand edge of the middle row does. This time, the secretary with the pen is absent; in his place is a man holding a piece of paper, perhaps a text or musi-cal notation of some sort, which, of course, he is studiously ignoring.

Now, the fact that one of the guardsmen is standing in the exact center of the painting, dressed in armor rather than in the civilian dress of the others, makes it look as though Jacobsz. decided on a subordinate arrangement to unify the group. Not only that, he shows this central figure in the process of loading his musket, whereas the others are merely holding their muskets at their sides. Six had no reservations about identifying this figure as the captain. On the other hand, the figure is uncomfortably squeezed between the others, and his head is even smaller than the ones in the back row. Consequently, in spite of all the ways in which this figure has been singled out, he is no more visually imposing than the others. At this stage in the evolution of group por-traiture, strict coordination was still an essential ingredient.

We also have to account for another conspicuous guardsman, namely, the one in the foreground who is expansively occupying a space just to right of center. Not only is he distinguished by a little silver pin on his coat, but his dress diverges from the standard red and black of the others. It is probably safe to assume that he is an officer. Together with his neighbor to the left, who is also rather distinctive in appearance, he is probably meant to balance out the figure of the captain. Once again, nearly all the men are gazing out in the general direction of the viewer, though not all toward the same exact point. The only ones who do look straight ahead of themselves along a diagonal are the two men in the lower corners; we have already seen similar behavior in the corresponding guardsman situated in the lower left-hand corner of Jacobsz.'s earlier portrait of 1529. The old dualistic contortion (torso left, head right, eyes straight), which Teunissen had completely eliminated by orienting the head and glance in the same direction, but which Jacobsz. still used in his earlier work, occurs several times in this painting, notably in the armored, central figure.

The faces of the guardsmen in Jacobsz.'s portrait of 1532 do not possess the same degree of soulful intimacy as those of 1529. A few of them, when

looked at individually, are, of course, quite intense, like the second one from the right in the middle row or the one to the left of center in the bottom row. All in all, however, they are placed too far forward, too intimidatingly close to the viewer, to be able to maintain the comfortable emotional and visual distance enjoyed by the figures in the upper row of the earlier painting. The fact that even Jacobsz. gradually felt compelled to give his figures more spatial presence by allowing them to loom out toward the viewer reinforces our conclusion that the spatial evolution in the Netherlands, at that time, was still primarily geared toward giving spatial presence to the solid figures, as in Italy, and not toward the later Northern emphasis on the free space surrounding the figures. This parallels the greater preoccupation with the external, physical aspects of a portrait at the expense of its internal, psychological ones. The portrait quality stood both to lose and to gain in the process; with Jacobsz., we are more likely to see it as a loss.

The placement of the figures outdoors is the most obvious difference in composition compared to the painting of 1529. Of course, we will never know for sure exactly why the artist adopted this particular setting. There may have been some sort of external reason for the choice, but it might also have been that the partitioned interior had become too narrow for the artist's urgent ambition to convey depth. At any rate, the way Jacobsz. arranged the figures in this outdoor setting is fundamentally different from the way the anonymous artist of 1531 went about arranging his. Here, the figures in the back row are almost touching the upper edge of the picture with the tops of their heads, leaving no room for any gothicizing mountain peaks in the distance. Clumps of foliage appear between these four figures, while, on the extreme left, individual trees arise in the free space over the heads of the middle row, their crowns abruptly cut off by the frame. These trees are much closer to the foreground plane than the murky mountain landscapes of the earlier paintings, so that there is also a much closer relationship between the figures and the landscape. The trunk of a tree tangent to the left-hand edge of the painting, in fact, makes a direct transition from one to the other. By simplifying the landscape and bringing it closer to the foreground, Jacobsz. achieved an artistic effect akin to the simplified interior in the painting from 1529.

Symmetry is still the basis of the composition of the figures, although the rows are arranged in a somewhat more casual and irregular way that creates an impression of movement. The projection and recession of the figures in the front row is less extreme; as a result, the wedge-shaped spatial center is also less developed. The heads of the figures in the middle row do not align themselves horizontally, but curve up quite a bit from the center out toward the sides. Even in the uppermost row, the heads turn in unexpected directions and bob irregularly up and down. So, Jacobsz.'s interest in allowing his figures the freedom to vary in height and depth, which in the portrait of 1529 was confined to the lower row, is now extended to the upper rows as well. What we see here is evidence that, although the strict, architectonic structural system

modeled on Italian Baroque patterns had an educational effect on Northern art, it was never appreciated or imitated for its own sake. And this is true of all the Italian elements in Netherlandish Mannerism.

Finally, a few more details deserve to be emphasized. The uniform and somewhat monotonous arrangement of heads might make one think that the artist was not particularly good at rendering detail. A closer look at the few examples where the hands are visible reverses this impression, however. They are not as eloquent as they were in the earlier painting, in the same way that the facial expressions are not—and, moreover, for the same reasons. If, however, one examines how the guardsman in the lower right-hand corner has vigorously grasped the barrel of his musket, how the man we have taken to be the captain grips his ramrod, and how the man to the left in front of the captain has placed his unusually foreshortened hand, in utter confidence, on the shoulder of the broad fellow to his right, one comes to appreciate Jacobsz.'s strength and expressive capability. Furthermore, one also has to give him credit for the way he varies the dress of all fifteen of the figures, so that each looks different, how every one of the caps flops at a different angle, how each of the collars creates a different set of folds around the shoulders, and so forth. This kind of concern for variety is naturally a very subjective one: it is the kind that takes delight in seeing fortuitous, fugitive visual phenomena caught in a single moment—precisely the sort of thing modern taste demands.

Once again, the remarkable thing about Jacobsz. is the way he managed to introduce subjective elements with discretion, allowing them only a minor role in the dominant, objective uniformity of the whole, which is reinforced by the general homogeneity of pattern and color. In only one instance does he go beyond the bounds of moderation—and that is in the case of the broad individual in the foreground with the little silver pin—which is why the figure stands out as much as he does. The two-part collar of his coat and the folds of his foreshortened right sleeve enjoy an obviously Italian-inspired, painterly treatment that capitalizes on the accidental shifting of parts of a figure from their well-defined, expected disposition. With this figure, we find Jacobsz. is moving somewhat in the direction of Teunissen.

The Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1534 by an Unknown Artist
The last dated painting of the first series of group portraits from the first, symbolic period is a painting in the Rijksmuseum, no. 537 [now Amsterdams Historisch Museum (hereafter AHM) no. A 7300] (fig. 16), dated 1534, portraying eighteen guardsmen from the Kloveniersdoelen. The pictorial conception is the same as that of Jacobsz.'s two works: the fraternal relationship among members of the group is expressed in purely symbolic terms. This time, however, all of them, including the corner figures in the foreground, are looking out toward the viewer. Even the typical dualistic, sidelong gazes appear several times. Some of the men hold muskets, and two of them are loading their weapons. Especially common is the placement of hands on one

Fig. 16. Anonymous
Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1534
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

another; there is also some pointing of fingers. Totally absent, however, is the man with the quill or the piece of paper with writing.

Again, subordination is used sparingly to unify the group, the way we found it in Jacobsz.'s portrait of 1532. Now, however, there are two men who are distinguished from the others by their finer apparel, albeit not by armor. This time they wear parrot-shaped pendants attached to thick, heavy, finely worked chains around their necks. In addition, both of them carry scepters and enjoy a prominent place in the foreground. In the very center of the composition — the place previously occupied by the man in the armored breastplate whom we took to be the captain — is now a perfectly ordinary individual. Moreover, although, in one case, a finger is being pointed at one of the men with the parrot-shaped pendants, there are two instances where otherwise undistinguished members are singled out in this way. Furthermore, the kind of silver pin found on the coat of one of the men with a scepter, and possibly on that of the other as well, is also worn by one of the ordinary men. These details strongly suggest that the two men distinguished by their accessories are not the commanding officers at all, as one might suppose at first, but bearers of some sort of waggish honorific (the Parrot Kings, as it were). At any rate, subordination is hardly emphasized at all. The heads of the scepter bearers do not stand out in any way; quite to the contrary, the most interesting portraits are those of their less-distinguished comrades.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to answer the most important question about the pictorial composition, namely, whether the figures are outdoors or in an interior [see note to fig. 16 on p. 378]. At any rate, there is more empty space between the heads of the figures and the frame than in the paintings of 1529, 1532, and 1533. This in itself suggests that there might originally have been a landscape above — meaning, of course, behind the figures. On the other hand, there is a date, just barely legible, on the blank surface slightly to the right of center; and since this is unlikely to have been hovering in midair in the landscape, one could also imagine it written on the solid wall of an interior space. Another conceivable variation, of course, is that the date might have been written on a pillar located in the landscape, for which there are examples from the 1550s. Presumably, a cleaning of this very dirty and damaged area of the painting would clarify this point.

So, all that remains to consider is the figures themselves. For the first time they are not arranged in strictly horizontal rows on top of or behind one another. Nevertheless, as a group, they still manage to create an overall impression of objective regularity, for the composition is still based on the idea of individual vertical components lined up in rows. What is different is that the rows are not oriented horizontally, but diagonally in the well-known staggered or diamond arrangement. Obviously, the anonymous artist of the civic guard group portrait of 1534 has taken the composition of Jacobsz.'s portrait of 1532 one systematic step further. The idea of placing one figure in the center with one man to either side in the foreground is the same in both paintings. The tendency to stagger the vertical axes of the figures within a

row, which had begun in Jacobsz.'s portrait, and which was at least latent in Teunissen's portrait of 1533, is obviously greater, allowing irregularities to enter in, even in the alignment of the uppermost heads. And since the tops of these heads are no longer forced to conform to a horizontal line, they also no longer extend right up to the very upper edge of the picture frame. Furthermore, the figures are not pressed as closely together side to side as in the 1532 portrait, particularly in the right half of the painting, so that more of each torso is visible.

The modeling of the faces is even more emphatic than in Jacobsz.'s portrait, and one is impressed by the anonymous artist's use of shadows to present the figures as convincing solids occupying space that project toward the viewer. Be that as it may, the ultimate goal of the portraitist is not primarily to depict the extension of material objects in space, but to express the character of the sitters, as revealed by the way they gaze observantly out of the painting. When looking at a portrait, a modern viewer in particular always tends to concentrate primarily on the eyes and then, after that, on the mouths. As far as the quality of the heads is concerned, hardly any are of the bland, routine type that occur even in parts of Jacobsz.'s portrait of 1532. Several of them, in fact, truly anticipate Holland's heyday of the portraiture of mood in the seventeenth century. A good example of this is the man in the upper right corner, with his probing gaze, his prominent mouth, and his head slightly to one side.

Who is the artist of this painting? The easiest answer would be Jacobsz. himself, because then one could talk, on the one hand, about how he had developed further along the lines already sketched out, and, on the other, about how, in spite of the greater plasticity of the heads, he returned, as much as was still possible, to the greater perfection of his portraits of 1529. I am afraid that I cannot confirm the attribution on grounds of painting technique. First of all, I have never seen the portrait in Saint Petersburg in the original; secondly, when I did see the portrait of 1529, it was under very unsatisfactory conditions, because the painting was not on exhibition during either of my two visits to the Rijksmuseum, and I was only able to get a quick look at it in storage. Therefore, there is no way for me to make a useful comparison. Based on the photograph I have of the work, the hands look cruder than the kind we are used to seeing in Jacobsz.'s work; as far as the heads are concerned, however, there is nothing that would speak against the attribution. Six ([see note 15] p. 106) ascribes the work to Allaert Claesz., an artist who, according to van Mander, produced a number of civic guard group portraits. Even if he turns out to be right, however, there can be no dispute about the fact that the pictorial conception and the composition of the painting of 1534 rely very closely on the approach established by Jacobsz. to the new artistic problems posed by group portraiture.

The Second Series of Group Portraits of the First, Symbolic Period, 1554–1566

Schaep's list of 1653 makes it clear that there were once many more civic guard group portraits in Amsterdam than are accounted for today in City Hall and in the Rijksmuseum. Even van Dijk's list of 1758 is much longer than today's inventories.[16] Now, of the surviving early civic guard group portraits, none of the securely dated ones is known to have originated between 1534 and 1554. Furthermore, there are no compelling reasons to assign any of the undated surviving works to these years. If we add to this the fact that neither Schaep's list nor van Dijk's includes a single work for the period between 1534 (or 1535) and 1551, then we are forced to conclude that the cultivation and evolution of the group portrait up to that point came to an abrupt standstill between the mid-1530s and the early 1550s. There must, of course, be some explanation for this. As soon as we know more about the history of painting in Holland during the period, we should be able to figure out what temporarily drew artists and their clients away from group portraits toward other types of commissions; for the moment, I would not care to speculate.

The second, related series of civic guard group portraits produced in Amsterdam begins in the 1550s and lasts until 1566. After this comes another hiatus, apparently caused by the Wars of Independence against Spain. The evolution picks up again in the 1580s, and thereafter continues without further interruption; these later group portraits, however, contain so much that is new in regard to pictorial conception and composition that we have to assign them to a second, independent period. In many respects, however, the second series of works from the first period represents a natural transition to the second period.

Schaep lists three works dating between the years 1551 and 1553, and commissioned by the Voetboogsdoelen, some of which are also mentioned in van Dijk. None of these, however, have been identified with extant works. Therefore, the earliest secure work of this late series from the first period is the group portrait from 1554 of Squad E of the Voetboogsdoelen (fig. 17), now in Amsterdam City Hall, where it hangs in the same room as Teunissen's painting of 1533 discussed above. Although unsigned, it was generally ascribed to Teunissen until recently.[17]

The Civic Guard Group Portrait from 1554 by an Unknown Artist

We find ourselves face to face with twenty-two crossbowmen, most of whom are lined up in three strictly horizontal rows. The arrangement immediately reminds us of the portraits of the earlier period; in fact, the composition comes across as even more dependent on antiquated and objective devices than even Jacobsz.'s earlier painting, in which at least a certain amount of orientation toward the center relieves the rigidity of the otherwise linear pattern. On the other hand, the bearded heads, certain actions of a momentary nature, and the quality of the landscape behind them all clearly indicate that the unknown artist of this work struck out on a decisively subjective course.

Fig. 17. Anonymous
Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1554
Amsterdam, City Hall

Let us resume our usual order of analysis. And here, in the pictorial conception, we find that the twenty-two members of Squad E are united not only by the kind of symbolism familiar to us from Jacobsz.'s group portraits, but also by the genre motif of the banquet which Teunissen had been the first to exploit. The straightforward, regular lineup of figures is interrupted in the lower right-hand corner by a small table. It is not very deep, but large enough to accommodate the tankard held by one of the crossbowmen and the secretary's ledger. Behind the table, one of the men is holding a tall goblet with a pear-shaped bowl decorated with a network pattern; a second member, to the extreme left of the middle row, holds a crystal goblet. Though it is not certain from the reproduction, others seem to be presenting edible items: the man in the lower left corner may be grasping a herring; the colleague two places to his right may have an apple in his hand. The only symbols whose meaning we can be absolutely sure of are drinking vessels that refer to the ritual of toasting brotherhood.

While Teunissen emphatically defined the whole area where the meal is taking place by including the large table, the anonymous artist of 1554 only hints at it. Therefore, if we decided that Teunissen was developing in the direction of genre painting in 1533, then his successor (assuming the painting is not by Teunissen himself) must be reverting to a more strictly symbolic pictorial conception. Symbols associated with eating and drinking, which Jacobsz. had avoided, became popular from then on. Compared to Teunissen's work of 1533, the present painting represents a step backward; by comparison with Jacobsz.'s portraits, however, it signals a definite increase in subjectivity. Moreover, the ways in which this subjectivity is put to use — for example, the representation of the transitory moment in which the lid of the tankard held by the man in the right foreground is about to snap open in response to the pressure of his finger — demonstrate that this artist has progressed even beyond Teunissen's painting of 1533.

There are numerous other symbols in the painting, aside from those associated with the communal banquet. The motif of touching hands, however, plays a less prominent role: probably the growing preference for more colorful, arresting, and explicit actions made hand gestures seem far too intimate. Pointing, on the other hand, is still in evidence — though only, it seems, directed at the three officers who are all in the front row. In their hands, the guardsmen also have a number of new objects, encountered for the first time, whose symbolic significance will have to wait to be deciphered by someone more expert in the civic guard customs of sixteenth-century Amsterdam: besides the crossbow and bolt, whose meanings are obvious, there are a large bird (a parrot?) perched like a hunting falcon on one man's hand, an ornamental key, a metal tube, and other objects. Because these symbolic objects are partly overlapped by other things, and almost impossible to make out both in the original painting and in the reproduction, there is not much more that can be said about them.

There are two details, however, that deserve further attention. The first is

the secretary, who, displaying the quill in hand, leans forward with undisguised eagerness to fix his attention more squarely on the spectator; at the same time, however, he is placing his left index finger on the open book in front of him. The secretary's double purpose in leaning forward and his attentive expression give him a lively appearance in a way that was obviously intentional. This combination of a symbol and a subjective, momentary action is even more powerful than the one mentioned before, where the crossbowman was about to snap back the lid of his tankard.

The second detail is even more fascinating, and involves the individual in the upper right-hand corner who is standing behind the partition that forms a backdrop for the rest of the group, with his left hand resting on the railing and his head cocked at an odd angle. He has burst into a wide grin, exposing his teeth, as he takes a sidelong glance at the owl perched on his shoulder, which, in turn, gazes back. It is such a surprise to find this kind of figure in a civic guard group portrait, that one is first inclined to assume that the individual involved is some sort of professional jokester or hired clown, who, while not himself a member, had somehow become a regular participant in the company's activities, someone like the servants who are routinely included in the later regent group portraits. However, the silver pin in the shape of a crossbow on the figure's coat marks him clearly as one of the regular company members.

Whatever the symbolic significance may be, two remarkable things should be noted. The first is that the man with the owl makes a show of emotion: he is not in the state of attentiveness, disinterested observation, which until now has been the sole source of the psychological character of these figures. Secondly, this is the first instance where two living creatures are shown interacting. Granted, one of them is a human being and the other is a bird; nevertheless, this is the very first time that a member of a group has ever been allowed to divert his attention away from a point outside of the painting to something inside it, a situation simply unprecedented in group portraiture. The reason that the artist included such an unusual detail can only be that he was experimenting with genre motifs, as could already be seen in the two figures in the lower right-hand corner. Although the composition as a whole is held together more than ever by symbolism, such details compensate for that.

All of the other heads turn to look out of the painting. The figures no longer suffer from the triple contortion found in Jacobsz.'s works: at least two of the three moveable parts involved — torso, head, and eyes — are always turned in the same direction. On the left, more regular side of the painting, the direction of the figures' glances is consistently more uniform and concentric. This contrasts with the arrangement on the right side, which exhibits the same delight in variety that characterized Teunissen's painting of 1533. This time, however, only a few figures are not looking directly at the viewer but instead off at a sharp angle to the picture surface and beyond the picture frame.

These figures do not impress us with great intellectual depth: they do not seem to convey either a will for action (the grandeur of the Italian postulate)

or even concentrated attentiveness. We read in their facial features the simple will to live, though in the North this is never without a tinge of soulfulness. The individuals with the most intent expressions and the most spontaneous-seeming relationship to the viewer are the two in the lower right-hand corner. This makes it seem as though the artist were intentionally directing the viewer's attention to this focal point, just as Correggio, in *La notte* (Night), made the shepherd the entry point into the rest of the picture. Subjective experiments like these, which attempted actively to control where the viewer was to stand in front of the painting, are typical of this period.

The chaotic right side of the composition, as mentioned earlier, is one of its conspicuous features. The simple, restrained arrangement of the left side, where we find three stacked, horizontal rows, is broken up on the right by the spatial demands of the table and set off balance by the quick alternation of the figures' glances. This extreme way that one side of the painting contrasts with the other seems contradictory; yet it must have been intentional on the part of the artist, and thus a response to the artistic volition of the era.

The heads, with their stronger contrasts of light and dark, reveal a heightened interest in three-dimensional modeling. It is not so much that the artist has pushed the second and third rows back in relation to the foreground, but that he intentionally made the front row jump out startlingly in the direction of the viewer. The hands of the foreground figure holding the crossbow exemplify this: his left hand is pointing toward the viewer in a way reminiscent of Scorel's later group portraits.

The background combines the idea of a landscape with that of an interior: the group has assembled under a kind of loggia enclosed by a low parapet about as high as the shoulder level of the back-row figures, whose heads stand out against the landscape. The parapet supports two piers, of which the one in the center displays the squad's letter *E* along with the date. The landscape unfolds in the broad intervals between these pillars, where we find new motifs, as well as an increase in spatial illusion. The new motifs represent the entry of Romanism: the upper torso of a nude female statue visible in the adjoining room at left; to the right of the broad pillar, a portion of Roman architecture that obviously serves to clarify the receding layers of space; below it, a detail from the ruins of the Basilica of Constantine and the side view of a portico, possibly that of the Pantheon; also, an obelisk and the Pyramid of Cestius. To the right of the pier with the date is a city with a tholos temple and arcuated substructure — perhaps a reference to Tivoli — at the foot of a fantastically craggy mountain. This is the furthest point in the landscape. From the right edge of the painting, we proceed from a portion of an arcade, possibly derived from the Temple of Janus Quadrifrons; to a clump of dark foliage; and finally to an isolated tree, which is likewise silhouetted against the background. Behind it, the rock-girt city drops back into the far distance. Here we find the same jagged peaks and crenellations that Netherlandish artists had persistently included in their landscapes since the fifteenth century, as a way of satisfying their yearning for infinite depth and never-ending heights. Now,

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however, they are carefully connected with the foreground figures in a way that can be subjectively gauged by the viewer. To appreciate this, let us compare it with the landscape in the painting of 1531, and even that of 1533. In the earlier examples, the parts that extend to the top of the picture are the ones furthest back in the landscape; here, they are the things closest to the viewer. For example, the nearest trees and buildings to the right and left near the frame have their tops cut off in accordance with subjective human perception, whereby things that are close look large, while things far off in the distance appear small.

The landscape background of this civic guard group portrait is by itself a good indication of how subjective the painting of Holland had become since 1531 when Patinir's landscapes represented the model, consisting of a foreground that drops down abruptly and a background looming up behind it, but no connection between the two. Largely responsible for this increase in subjectivity was an acceptance of Italian linear perspective; hence, the focus was on the objects in the landscape and not on the free space between them or the visual impression as a whole.

The use of Roman architectural motifs in the landscape can also be understood in this light. The artist did not include them simply because they were Roman, but because they provided just the right kind of crisply and clearly defined shapes with stressed contours needed to create the subjective, perspectival illusion of space now demanded by the times. Obviously, trees did not lend themselves well to this purpose, nor did the Northern style of architecture, which placed no emphasis on clear-cut horizontals. Antique buildings, however, were the perfect solution, and besides, they were readily available in engravings, already neatly projected in linear perspective. However much linear perspective may have been engrossing the painter at this point, he still obviously had some idea of the future potential of manipulating light and dark for creating space, because the closer, foreground motifs are always darker, whereas the lighter shapes recede.

There are a few innovations to note about the figures as well that also clearly indicate how Netherlandish painting was on the verge of tackling new, albeit only latently perceived, problems. For the first time, we find bearded figures, although the clean-shaven men are still in the majority. Now, a beardless human head creates a more objective impression, since its stressed outline contour keeps it self-contained. Furthermore, the clean-cut look, as a rule, goes together with the wearing of a uniform, a standardized form of clothing. A beard, on the other hand, like a shock of curly hair, blurs the outlines of the head, and, therefore, allows for a more flexible interaction with the surrounding space. Furthermore, it invites more individualized dress, and, all in all, encourages a more subjective interpretation of fortuitous, momentary phenomena. In the mid-1550s, the increased popularity of the beard and the switch from uniforms to a rich array of civilian dress based on little more than the arbitrary tastes of its wearers are both signs of a heightened interest in variety for its own sake. Moreover, where artists had previously opted for

sharp outlines and tangible shapes (compare the heads in the painting of 1534), they now began to prefer more relaxed, more visually subjective forms. This goes along perfectly with what we have already discovered to be true about the heightened modeling of these heads and the transformed character of landscape.

Finally, let us turn to an inconspicuous detail that gives us great insight into the larger stylistic tendencies developing at this time: the finely zig-zagged edges of the white collars. Surely, the artist would not have lavished all the delicate attention of a miniaturist on these, had they not had a signifi-cant artistic function. And this function can only have been to soften up the outlines of the collars — whose contrasting whiteness made them especially harsh — by means of the zigzag edging, thus interconnecting them with the surrounding area.

A comparison of this painting with the signed and dated painting by Cornelis Teunissen from 1533 that hangs alongside it in Amsterdam's City Hall makes an attribution to this artist tempting.[18] Both works are filled with the same restless spirit willing to risk anything to try something new. The heads and hands of the figures in both examples are robust and coarse, although, in each case, the artist (or artists) involved was very conscious that the personality of each individual be contained in the gaze. The difference in date of twenty-one years between the two works might be enough to account for the differences between them. E. W. Moes, however, has recently made the case that Teunissen was probably already dead by 1553.[19] At any rate, any confirmation of the attribution based on an analysis of the originals will have to wait until both paintings can be cleaned and examined side by side.

In Amsterdam City Hall, there is another civic guard group portrait, dated 1555, which van Dijk attributes to Teunissen, albeit with the reservation that the landscape is possibly by Scorel. Six [see note 15] made the statement that "it really does seem to be by Teunissen." Of course, Moes's conclusions cast all of this in doubt. I am not in a position to add to the debate, because I did not get a chance to see the painting when I was in City Hall, presumably because it is "very damaged," as Six has confirmed. All that can be deduced about the painting dated 1555 — based on Schaep's report of an inscription that reads "*Ex animo omnia*" (all things from the soul), which he himself described as "*pro symbolo*" (for a symbol) — points to another instance of the symbolic mode.

It is not only the innovations that we have seen in the civic guard group portrait of 1554 that demonstrate that in the 1550s the problem of group portraiture was being addressed with renewed enthusiasm, at least in Amster-dam. It is also clear from the sheer number of known works from the period: except for 1552, there is at least one surviving or documented civic guard group portrait for every year between 1551 and 1559. It will come as a sur-prise, then, to turn now to a work dated 1557 (Rijksmuseum, no. 1419 [now AHM no. A 7344], fig. 18) that obviously and unquestionably harks back in pictorial conception and composition to the earliest known group portrait,

Jacobsz.'s work of 1529. That is why it is so important to identify what makes it more advanced than its predecessor. Let us now proceed to the seventeen musketeers of Squad F of the Kloveniers' guild.

The Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1557 by an Unknown Artist

To begin with the pictorial conception, there is a clear effort to make the symbols more conspicuous, eye-catching, and varied than we have seen before. The intimate motif of touching hands is now completely missing. With only one exception, all of the figures have at least one hand exposed; in fact, for over a third of them, both hands are showing. As a result, almost every musketeer has the opportunity to hold something up for view. Some of these objects are familiar to us from Jacobsz., such as the squad's weapon and the secretary's quill, as well as the tankard of beer and another, gobletlike drinking vessel, both suggestive of the banquet theme that Teunissen introduced into the symbolism of civic guard group portraits. Finally, there are symbols whose meaning will have to be left to experts on early Netherlandish civic guard customs: the skull; the ornamental bowl with its pear-shaped protuberances; the letter addressed to "*Domino Cornelio van Dellef in Amsterdam*"; the letters on the barrel of the large pistol, only the last part of which Six was able to decipher as "*Gods woert*" (God's word); and the like.[20]

What naturally results from this desire to liven up and vary the symbols is an even greater emphasis on the individual figure than had previously been the case, and, furthermore, to a degree that might seem to threaten the unity of the group as a whole. To counteract this danger effectively, the pictorial composition has, for the first time, a truly subordinate arrangement. The central figure in the lower row, to whom we will return later, is obviously the captain, and he occupies the most important place in the composition. Unlike the central figures in the paintings of 1529 and 1531, however — each of whom is pushed back and partly masked by his colleagues to either side — this one is placed prominently in the foreground as a half-length figure. He is further distinguished from the others by his dress, coloring, action, posture, facial expression, and even by the wider and more deeply zigzagged edging of his collar.

A commander who clearly towers above his squad is admittedly a more effective device for unifying a group than all the symbolic objects the figures are holding. This kind of subordination is based on action, however, and thus it not only contradicts the democratic ideas of the civic guards but the artistic ideas of group portraiture and the pictorial conception of earlier Hollandish art in general. Obviously, its strong recurrence here is a sign of renewed Romanism. The entire subsequent evolution shows that this was by no means a response to arbitrary fashion, as was the case with Italian view painting, but a deep-seated urgency. A certain amount of subordination was necessary, even in a group portrait, to achieve the greater degree of unity that the art of the period was increasingly expected to have. Therefore, it was to occur more and more frequently, and with greater and greater emphasis, at

Fig. 18. Anonymous
Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1557
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

the same time that painters constantly sought coordinate devices that could counteract it.

As far as the individual heads are concerned, the artist obviously aimed for a greater variety in the glances, because the shape of the eyes runs the whole gamut from narrowed to wide open. He also tried a number of times to make the shape of the mouth agree with the emotion expressed by the eyes. Good examples of this are the figure in the upper right-hand corner, with open mouth and narrowed eyes, plus the one in the lower right-hand corner, with his tightly pressed lips and wide-eyed stare. Enlivening and varying the facial expressions, however, results in increased subjectivity, which the artist obviously wanted to counteract with the objective effect of the uniform direction of the men's gazes. In this objectivity, this artist is even more old-fashioned than Jacobsz. himself, since the gazes of all the figures in the lower row are strictly symmetrical, and the middle figure—albeit in somewhat subdued form—is still assuming the old triple contortion (the body to the left, head to the right, eyes front) that Teunissen had already abandoned by 1533. In the upper row, three men on each side turn toward the center, while only two are turned away; all, however, are looking out toward the viewer. Consequently, what we find here is the same increase in contrasts that we discovered earlier: just as subordination operates to tone down the more lively symbolism, so the regular orientation of the men's gazes holds the livelier language of those gazes in check.

An examination of the composition reveals that the centralized symmetry is even greater than it was in its predecessor of 1529; moreover, the figures in the lower row are compressed into the plane to an even greater degree than in Jacobsz., where they looked as though they were about to step forward out of line. Only in the upper row do two guardsmen disturb the concentric regularity and create a livelier rhythm than that found in Jacobsz. In both cases, however, the movement is kept in bounds by the close-cropped horizontal of the upper frame, close to the tops of the heads.

In spite of all these objective devices, an increased concern for creating spatial illusion, particularly as it affects the figures, is much in evidence. The heads and hands are modeled extensively and carefully in convincing relief, so that they clearly occupy space and project toward the foreground in the direction of the viewer. The bearded members are now in the majority. The collars with the jagged edges are now wider and, on the younger men, extend from neck to chin. However, the best place to look for evidence of the progress that has been made in balancing figures and space—in the way they are normally experienced by subjective sight—is in the dividing partition and the background wall. What was once the front railing has now been combined with Teunissen's idea of a banquet to form a table with a meander-pattern top (or carpet?), projecting in the foreground toward the viewer and cut off by the frame. It provides the musketeer in the lower right-hand corner with a place to rest his tankard; for the captain in the middle, a place to prop up his musket; and, for two other men, a support for their arms.

A variety of cast shadows link the figures and the tabletop. The partition in the middle ground is kept so low that it no longer provides a neutral foil for the figures of the lower row; instead, the heads of all the figures extend above it. Finally, the back wall is covered with wallpaper consisting of a geometric diamond pattern in infinite repeat containing the squad's letter, F. The sections of the wallpaper pattern not obscured by the figures of the upper row are rendered with the kind of exactness and completeness that closely resembles what a subjective viewer would really see. Once again, therefore, our artist betrays a definite interest in capturing the momentary, subjective appearance of the shapes and outlines of individual, tangible, self-contained objects for their own sake. Definitely still missing, however, is the use of free space to connect one thing with another optically.

Consequently, the composition has the very same deliberate increase in contrasts that characterizes the pictorial conception. On the one hand, the symmetry is even stricter than it was in Jacobsz.; on the other hand, the spatial setting is so convincingly related to the sculpturally modeled figures that they seem about to jump out at us. The variety of dress, which has conspicuously superseded the uniform in this painting, serves the same subjective purpose, as does the lively local color found replacing the monotony of the earlier civic guard group portraits. Red, a color previously avoided, now appears in brilliant abundance in the lower zone, on the captain's sleeves, and on the wallpaper pattern above.

Based on this analysis, it is obvious that this painting is much more advanced than that of 1529. Now, this conclusion might satisfy a historian — who would let it go at that — but it will not convince a spectator with modern tastes for whom Jacobsz.'s early work, in spite of its archaic qualities, is much more appealing because it has fewer inherent contradictions. What today's viewer would find disturbing in the work from 1557 is the contrast inherent in an emphatic modeling of the heads within a limited space. The flatter, more reticently modeled heads of 1529, therefore, are more in keeping with their spatial setting, which is much less developed than in the later example.

The Rijksmuseum attributed the painting of 1557 to Teunissen until recently, when Moes used biographical evidence to show that this was unlikely. This conclusion was accepted all the more readily, as it had always been difficult to accept two paintings as diverse as those of 1533 and 1557 as the work of one and the same artist.

The same master, whoever he may have been, painted Squad B of the Voetboogs' guild in 1559, a painting that now hangs in the Rijksmuseum as no. 1418 [RM no. SK-C-376]. Twenty-one figures are arranged in three horizontal rows, of which only the lower one has a pronounced center. The number of symbolic objects held by the men has conspicuously increased. One of them has a piece of paper with the words "*Synse also*" written on it, which, Moes has kindly informed me, is probably the beginning of a song, but does not add anything to our understanding of the painting. The artist's overriding concern, clearly, was to ensure as much as possible that each figure had

some sort of symbolic object in his hand: this was already clear in the paint-ing of 1557, and the painting of 1559 brought it to its height. On the one hand, the resulting increase in symbolism can no longer be ignored, and, on this level, serves to unify the painting. On the other hand, there is a strong empha-sis on the separateness and autonomy of each figure that palpably works against the unity of the whole. The tendency toward increasing contrasts already apparent since 1554, reaches, in a sense, the highest point of its evo-lution in this example.

As for the composition, the background is a landscape that continues in the style of the painting from 1554, and its galloping Saint George, an obvi-ous reference to the squad's membership in the guild of Sint Joris, becomes part of the painting's symbolism. In general, this painting is indicative of the same artistic volition as the earlier one, and, because of the even more jarring clash of opposites, the modern viewer finds it even harder to warm up to it.

In art history, whenever we see a heightening of contrasts like this between certain elements in the pictorial composition and their visual effect, we can be sure that a new solution for a particular problem lies just around the corner. After all, what are new solutions, if not reconciliations of the conflicts that preceded them? Therefore, it comes as no surprise that, in the 1560s, group portraiture in Holland managed to resolve the contradictions that were a source of irritation in the paintings of the 1550s. And, as far as we know, there were two artists involved in this problem-solving process at the same time. The one who gets the credit for finding a solution first, though in some-what underdeveloped form, is no less than the trailblazer of group portraiture as a whole: Dirk Jacobsz.

The Civic Guard Group Portraits by Dirk Jacobsz. from the Second Half of the First, Symbolic Period

According to van Mander, Jacobsz. lived until 1567. We possess two of his group portraits, both showing members of Squad E of the Kloveniers' guild, dated 1561 and 1563. In 1653, when Schaep saw them, they were still joined as one work; now, however, the earlier piece is in the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg, and the later one in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Schaep assumed that the year 1561 applied to both paintings; Six, however, has since pointed out, and rightly so, the unlikelihood that the artist painted the same squad twice in one year, because there is a difference in the number of mem-bers and in the individuals involved. And, even though the inscriptions on both paintings have been restored, there is still no reason to doubt the accu-racy of the dates that are legible today. We know that Jacobsz. was the artist, because his signature appears on both paintings in the same form as on the works of 1529 and 1532.

Before we take a look at the paintings of 1561 and 1563, I would like to speculate briefly about whether he might have painted any additional group portraits in the intervening period, and about the chances of any of them hav-ing survived. Both things are possible, though there is no certain evidence for

either. Six (*Oud Holland* 13:95) claimed for Jacobsz. the civic guard group portrait of 1556, showing sixteen members of Squad B of the Kloveniers' guild, which is now in the archive level of City Hall. By his own admission, however, this work is in the "saddest" of conditions, and hung so poorly — way at the top of a flight of stairs next to a window — that it is impossible to assess properly. What Six could see of the work suggested that it was weaker than the ones from the first period and not comparable to them in composition or handling. The figures are still arranged in two rows, with no landscape in the background. On the basis of this description alone — since I have not seen the painting — I can already tell that it has nothing in common with the known works that Jacobsz. produced in the 1560s, since these are all characterized by a rejection of the row arrangement and by the inclusion of landscape. Symbolic details include a Musketeer King with scepter and chain, probably something like the two figures in the painting of 1534. Furthermore, Six mentions musical notation on a piece of paper containing the words: "*die Man, die Wijf*" (the husband, the wife). A comprehensive survey of the entire work of Jacobsz., who was certainly one of the most advanced painters in sixteenth-century Holland, would certainly have to come to terms with the possible attribution of this painting of 1556 to him. In good conscience, however, we can leave it out. Dr. Six's remarks alone are enough to show that it has none of the innovations of the 1560s.

Another work attributed to Jacobsz. by Six is a painting of eight musketeers, no. 547 [RM no. SK-C-405] in the Rijksmuseum. The number of members is as small as it is in later group portraits of regents; moreover, the two heads closest to the upper edge were probably added later, thus bringing the original number down to only six. The strong middle tones in the modeling of the two heads, plus the highlights on their eyes, foreheads, and noses, seem to indicate this. Perhaps it was only one wing of a triptych of the kind we are about to discuss (figs. 19, 20).

For all that, the conception and composition of this painting fit in nicely with the known works of Jacobsz. from the 1560s and, to a certain extent, even with the earlier examples from the 1530s, thus making it possibly the only transitional work to survive from the interim between the two phases of the first period. Admittedly, most of the men are bearded, and all of the figures are looking out toward the viewer. The wineglass appears several times as a symbol. The skin tones and even the black drapery have a definite golden tinge to them, and this use of color makes the work stand out from all the other works of the same period. On the other hand, its genuinely Hollandish concern for balancing and integrating the figures with the free space between them puts it in sharp contrast to the bright color of the works of 1557 and 1559.

The composition consists of three staggered rows. The two heads in the middle look away from the center, while their two comrades on either side look inward. The fact that the figures, in spite of the small number, are not lined up in a single plane, one next to the other, but in three rows behind each

Figs. 19, 20. Dirk Jacobsz.
Left and right panels of his civic guard group portrait
of 1529 (see fig. 12), between 1550 and 1560
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

other, reflects the artist's conscious intention to create space. He did so by allowing the men to overlap each other and to recede in space, even though the landscape in the background seems to be a later addition, along with the two uppermost heads. All of these features would serve to justify an attribution to Jacobsz. However, since there are no other securely documented works by him from this period — approximately the very early 1550s — we have no basis of comparison with which to verify the attribution. Even the painting of 1556, as noted above, is in much too bad a condition to serve this purpose.

The relatively securely attributed two side panels (figs. 19, 20; see pp. 101 ff.) that flank Jacobsz.'s civic guard group portrait of 1529, the earliest known civic guard group portrait, with which we started off the present chapter, will give us a good idea of how Jacobsz. might have handled a group portrait in the 1550s. The characteristics of the second phase of the symbolic period are unmistakable in the heightened three-dimensional quality of the heads — among which we already find some beards — as well as in the greater number of symbols, including drinking vessels and food. Even the way the artist treats the heads, which still, without exception, gaze out toward the viewer, is exactly the same as in Jacobsz.'s signed works of the 1560s, which we will be getting to know shortly.

The pictorial conception clearly reveals an increase in subjective, momentary phenomena: for example, by the secretary on the right-hand panel and by the man with the creased piece of paper on the left. The zigzag pattern created by the heads results from the staggered arrangement, and signals a greater emphasis on diagonals. The sidelong glances of some of the figures are also worthy of note, as we will find further parallels for them in Jacobsz.'s other work.

For all that, these two side panels will never be able to give us a truly clear picture of Jacobsz.'s artistic volition during the 1550s, simply because of what they are, namely, side panels, which by their very nature lack the kind of self-contained compositional characteristics of a central panel. Not only that, but the spatial arrangement of the side panels was partly dictated by the central panel of the older painting in such features as, for example, the inclusion of partitions. These turn out to be the very features that allow us to gauge how far Jacobsz. has advanced since 1529 in his depiction of tangible, discrete forms that look convincingly located in space as seen by the subjective eye. Ultimately, however, there are only two works that can give us genuine insight into Jacobsz.'s conception of the ideal group portrait, which he arrived at toward the end of his momentous and creative career: two late paintings, securely dated 1561 and 1563, respectively. Our first and primary focus will be the later of the two, the more mature work now in the Rijksmuseum, no. 718 [AHM no. A 7342] (fig. 21). Our very first glance at it will tell us that drastic changes have occurred in Jacobsz.'s thinking about both pictorial conception and composition.

The Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1563 by Dirk Jacobsz.

What has happened to the guardsmen who used to line up as individuals, isolated and objective with respect to the viewer? In their place is an assemblage of twelve musketeers, who — apparently in response to *one* shared impulse — have set out on a march now moving in *one* direction past the viewer. The eyes of all the men, however, are fixed on the viewer in the concentrated way that has been typical of Jacobsz.'s figures all along. Eight of the men are turned toward the right so that their right shoulders are facing us. At the same time, two men are positioned frontally, though without essentially deflecting the main flow toward the right. It is only the remaining two who put up a modest resistance to the main current, though they do not go so far as to present us with their left shoulders. Therefore, though the main movement is somewhat stemmed toward the right-hand edge, it is never completely dammed up, nor is it held in check by any sort of countermovement. This is the very first time that the members of one of our civic guard groups have been united by a common action: not, however, by a unique, "historical" action that took place at a specific time and place, but by a recurring event that was significant precisely because it occurred time and time again. In a word, this is "genre."

Teunissen deserves some credit for having made headway in this direction. He, however, only suggested the idea of a banquet by including the kind of things we associate with it, such as the table, the food, and the drinks; he did not actually show the men eating and drinking. In 1563, however, Jacobsz. engages the men directly in a common action in which almost all of them participate, and it is the kind of action that is not the least bit symbolic. On the contrary, it seems to capture a moment of time in the everyday life of the guardsmen that a viewing subject might witness in passing. This group portrait is, therefore, the first one to move more decidedly in the direction of modern pictorial conception.

It would be a mistake, however, to view the scene as actually representing what the modern viewer sees, that is, a detail view of a marching squad. Some details do seem to support such an interpretation, such as the splendid musketeer shouldering his weapon to the left of the pillar bearing the inscription. The diagonal line created by the musket carries the viewer's eye in the direction of the movement toward the right. Other details contradict this assumption, however: some guardsmen have ordered arms, holding their weapons upright at their sides just as their predecessors did in earlier group portraits. Furthermore, others are bearing symbolic objects instead of weapons — food (herring) and drinking vessels — in other words, not exactly the kinds of things one would take along on a march, but the sort one would expect at a banquet. Finally, the inscribed piece of paper on the pillar that bears Jacobsz.'s signature reads: "*Vreede Eendratigheidt behaeght Gods Maiesteid*" (Peace harmony is pleasing to God's majesty). The insistence on love of harmony in the inscription leaves no doubt that group unity was to be conveyed by objective and symbolic means.

Jacobsz. sought to balance the contradiction between this group unity and the fragmentation caused by the numerous symbols: first, by reducing their number (greater emphasis simply on weapons), and then—and this is his fundamental, far-reaching achievement—by introducing the idea of a shared, willful act. Although this intention represents a clear move in a subjective direction, he still made sure that the objective character of the group portrait did not get completely lost: first, by means of objective devices such as the figures who turn against the mainstream, and second, by means of the symbols, as surely it is not coincidence that the foreground figures point to them to draw the viewer's attention.

The idea of a common, unifying purpose is conveyed not only by the orientation of the figures' heads and torsos, but also by the direction of the eyes. From the very beginning of his career, Jacobsz. never self-consciously tried to create variety by making his figures look erratically to right and left at acute angles to the picture surface; he always had them looking directly out at the viewer approximately at right angles to the picture plane. His practice is in stark contrast to Teunissen's, as well as to that of most other group portrait painters of the period, with the exception of the anonymous artists of the paintings of 1534 and 1557. As a result, the glances of Jacobsz.'s figures have a greater degree of intimacy in the soulfulness of their expressions, which would have been disturbed by any livelier motor activity, and which was indispensable to Jacobsz.'s profoundly Hollandish artistic volition.

Consequently, his figures look out toward where the viewer is expected to stand (the only exception to this rule involves some, but not all, of the figures on the sides near the corners). Of course, as emphasized earlier, nothing permits us to assume the existence of a single viewing subject: the guardsmen's gazes by no means converge on a single set of viewing eyes, but presume almost as many pairs of eyes as there are guardsmen. These many pairs of eyes are, however, trained on a relatively narrow area, whereas other artists scatter the direction of their figures' gazes almost over the entire semicircle of 180 degrees. An unmistakable tendency toward greater unity in the group portrait, therefore, manifests itself in two ways: the viewing subject is more integrated, and so is the inner, psychological activity of the figures, namely, their attentiveness.

In this second phase of the first period, we also have the anonymous artist of 1557, who, while similar to Teunissen in the greater number of outward symptoms of subjectivity, nevertheless resembled Jacobsz. in the way he centralized the figures' gazes. A tendency toward directional unity of the gazes must also have become more lively during the fermenting evolution of the 1550s. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the artist who was the first to move in this direction would also be the one to take it a step further: a comparison between the painting of 1532 and that of 1563 shows how the center of focus of the men's attention has become even more compressed in the later work. We are even tempted to claim (though probably inaccurately) that some of them are gazing at one and the same point.

The greater unity in the direction in which the figures gaze is closely related to a greater unity in their movements. The direction of the march from left to right naturally means the eyes are directed in the same way, and even the figures turned away from the main movement look straight out, not back to the left. As a result, their glances do not intersect with those of their colleagues at acute angles, but converge at approximately the same point. I emphasize the word *approximately,* for Jacobsz. is in no way advanced enough to presuppose a *single* viewer. He allows the gazes of certain figures, such as the marksmen to the right of the pillar with the inscription, to deviate noticeably from those of the others. For the moment, most, though not all, of the figures opt to participate in the main direction of movement, as well as to concentrate the focus of their gaze.

As the overall conception of the group portrait began to relax and take on a more subjective character, we find a similar change in the conception of the individual heads, specifically in regard to their psychological character, which in Northern portraits was always understood in terms of attentiveness. At first, this consisted of a state of attentiveness that was as objective as possible, meaning that figures were expected to express their ability and willingness to be attentive, while avoiding momentary or subjective elements as much as possible. Artists in the sixteenth century gradually began to perceive this neutrality as unsatisfying, however, as witnessed by some of the figures in Teunissen's painting of 1533, who are turning their heads at all sorts of angles, and by the eccentrically positioned secretary in the painting of 1554. All of the experiments in this direction were, of course, only symptoms of the larger, growing tendency toward a more subjective interpretation of the heads. Because subjective, momentary movements, however, seemed incompatible with the fundamental nature of the portrait, the tendency toward subjectivity was held in check at this point.

Jacobsz. was in a much better position to solve this new problem of the individual portrait, even though in 1533 he had seemed antiquated and out-of-date compared to Teunissen, because he still made use of the triple contortion of torso, head, and eyes—a practice he did not abandon until 1563. Nevertheless, he was the one who was able to create a look of emotional intimacy in his figures, even in his very first group portrait of 1529, and he did so better than any of his followers whose works have come down to us, with the possible exception of the anonymous artist of 1534, with whom he might be identical. And that is why it is no surprise that Jacobsz. is also the one who was able to solve the problem of endowing portrait heads with an inner, subjective life without abandoning their portrait character.

It was not possible in portraiture to give attentiveness a greater degree of subjectivity by placing it in a more specific time and space, thus making it appear to be directed at a particular goal in a particular moment of time. This could only be achieved by combining it with one of the many forms of expressing will or emotion. The psychological conception of Italian portraiture was based on the expression of the will, namely, on the display of

the autonomy and greatness of individuals who demanded submission from everything around them. The Romanist influence in the Netherlands of the sixteenth century was also found in Holland to a certain extent, as is evident in the work of Anthonis Mor. It was not until later, however, in the Flemish school under Rubens, that a harmonious balance was struck between the Italian emphasis on individual will and the Northern partiality toward emotion. Holland was always closer to a form of expression associated with emotion, although not the kind that is self-absorbed and indistinguishable from the expression of will (of a desirous sort, in the form of pleasure, in Rubens, or negative and pathos-laden, in the form of displeasure, in van Dyck), but rather the sympathetic kind that rejects all forms of subordination in favor of pure attentiveness directed outwardly. Because this attentiveness is based on sympathy and thus selfless, its pathos can only be based on heartfelt participation, while pleasure can only take the form of humor.

Jacobsz.'s civic guard group portrait of 1563 is the first group portrait in which the heads reveal an effort to express emotion in the way described. The two figures in the lower left have deep creases running from their nostrils to the corners of their mouths that make it seem as though they are about to burst out in pleasant grins. The musketeer above them, the one with a gun on his shoulder, while perhaps not on the verge of smiling, is at least looking out at the viewer with a pleasant, benign expression. The viewer is irresistibly struck by the cheerful mood of camaraderie, which is further underscored by the weapons shouldered for the march.

At this point, we need to step back and recall how, at this moment in mid-sixteenth-century Netherlandish genre painting, artists were widely introducing humor into their work. Pieter Bruegel the Elder is the first who comes to mind, but there is also Pieter Aertsen whose work may be less engaging but, for that very reason alone, is all the more typical of Holland. The introduction of humor posed a potential problem for the evolution of group portraiture—as borne out by, among others, the grimacing secretary of 1554. Furthermore, it proves that the effort to externalize the expression of emotion could never succeed. We think we can read the contrasting mood of serious concentration, especially in the demeanor of the musketeer in the upper right-hand corner. It is safe to say that the emotionless attentiveness of the earlier portraits—which, at times, threatened to degenerate into an almost brutish will to live—seems to have been overcome in Jacobsz.'s last, most mature works. An era of painting of attentive sympathy, humor, and heartfelt, selfless participation has truly begun.

The progress in the physical aspects of the figures are almost more obvious than the psychological ones. For the very first time, the composition as a whole does not depend in any way on concentric, planar arrangement. Even the painting of 1554, in which there is a certain pull toward the lower right-hand corner, still retains a palpable central element. This is emphasized not only by the figures being mainly lined up in rows, but also by the broad bulk of the man with the crossbow in the front row. In the painting of 1563,

however, the main movement of the men from left to right carries the center of the painting along with it, and, consequently, totally erases any idea of an objective, concentric arrangement.

As discussed earlier, however, Jacobsz. did not yet assume the presence of a *single* viewer who would have expected the composition to be totally a function of the optically correct distribution of figures in space (namely, for it to be more in conformity with actual, subjective visual experience), and therefore he still sought unity in an arrangement that was objective, that is to say, that functioned in a plane. And, indeed, such regular, linear arrangements, as befit a plane, are not hard to find in the painting of 1563, for, just as in the painting of 1534, emphasis is placed on the diagonal. In the earlier example, however, the unknown artist strictly adhered to the idea of regularly staggered rows, whereas here the individual rows are irregular in a way that causes certain pairs of heads to be more closely related, which, in turn, contrasts them with their two neighbors. So, even though it seems from this that in the final analysis Jacobsz. has retained the objective, normative linear composition in a plane, it is so undermined as to render it useless for unifying the painting in any convincing way.

The next device that the Hollanders put into practice to unify a composition — one that artists such as Adriaen van Ostade, in particular, perfected in the seventeenth century — was the spatial center. This still qualifies as an objective device, because the unity that results is a function of the object itself, and is not in the consciousness of the viewing subject. On the other hand, the new type of spatial center is not a point or a line that is tied to a plane but a three-dimensional unit of space around which the visible objects are arranged.

Efforts to make use of this kind of spatial center are already apparent in a number of examples from the early sixteenth century, not only in the South (Correggio) but also in Gerrit van Haarlem's work, in Jacobsz.'s group portrait of 1529, and particularly in Teunissen's banquet of 1533. In the case of the latter two, the spatial center was always used in combination with symmetry that emphasizes the center of the picture plane. In the painting of 1554, on the other hand, the seed from which the spatial center grows has shifted from the center of the picture plane to the lower right-hand corner.

In the painting of 1563, even though there is not much room between them, the guardsmen still manage to give the viewer the impression that they are advancing from left to right toward the musketeer who is farthest forward, namely, the man in the lower right-hand corner who is holding the herring and seems to have paused slightly. We may be somewhat mistaken in this, but the relatively unified impression that the painting makes on the modern viewer, in spite of the way it vacillates between objectivity and subjectivity, is essentially based on the notion that the first man sets a definite goal for the forward movement. If what I am saying is correct, then this would be one of the earliest examples of the fusion of pictorial conception and composition that is characteristic of modern art.

Finally, no one will fail to see that the figures now seem to be set relatively farther apart from each other than they were earlier, and therefore benefit greatly from the freedom of movement that the new type of pictorial conception and composition naturally entailed. Thus, it was also a recognition on the part of the artists of the free space between solid objects that would become so important in painting from Holland during the period that followed.

In view of this painting's epochal significance to the evolution, we should discuss in greater detail the relationship that we have already observed between the figures and the landscape. Unfortunately, this is more easily said than done: not only is the painting very dirty and hung too high for good observation, but the background is heavily overpainted. The thick, round clouds with their highlighted edges are definitely not original, so that one is forced to view the rest of the landscape with some suspicion. As far as I can make out, the figures are surrounded by a loggia similar to the one in the painting of 1554. The relatively flat landscape begins behind the railing at the rear and consists of a few nearby trees cropped by the frame and some low, rocky mountains off in the distance. The optically natural way in which the various elements diminish in size as they recede into the distance, together with the obviously subordinate role played by the background, helps to integrate the landscape with the figures in the foreground.

Finally, if we examine the portrait heads with respect to their relationship to the surrounding space, the innovations are no less striking. A comparison between them and those by this artist in his group portraits from the first phase reveals that the contours of the heads, which are now predominantly bearded, have become softer, daintier, and more easily integrated with the surrounding free space. The curves of the faces, on the other hand, are now more prominent and sculpturesque, and the illusion of depth more convincing. If we compare them with the portrait heads in the painting of 1557, with their heavily modeled shadows, it becomes even more obvious that the modeling of Jacobsz.'s figures — however tangibly defined in height, width, and depth (projecting toward the viewer) — is not clear-cut and harsh but, like the contours, relatively soft and loose. This soft treatment of the relief surface is what gives Jacobsz.'s portrait heads that quality typical of Holland, and, at the same time, is the source of their appeal to the modern viewer. Furthermore, in comparison to the earlier painting of 1557, with its bright local color, especially in the clothing, Jacobsz.'s treatment of color in the present work signals a return to earth tones that is directly related to the Netherlandish preoccupation with the free space between the figures. Unfortunately, the poor condition of the painting forces us to leave it at that.

Now, in order to convince ourselves beyond a doubt that all of the new and innovative things we have discovered in Jacobsz.'s group portrait of 1563 are the result of a purposeful evolution rather than simply a happy accident, we need only refer to a precious piece of irrefutable evidence in his civic guard group portrait of 1561 in Saint Petersburg (fig. 22). It has all the characteristics of the painting of 1563, yet seems to represent a slightly earlier

Fig. 21. Dirk Jacobsz.
Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1563
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Fig. 22. Dirk Jacobsz.
Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1561
Saint Petersburg, Hermitage

and somewhat less-advanced stage of development when Jacobsz. had not yet arrived at a new solution to the old problem. For example, the marching motif is not yet part of the pictorial conception. Two-thirds of the nine figures are turned toward the left, and only one-third of them toward the right. The direction of their gazes, however, is concentrated toward the right-hand side, and, moreover, in such an obvious way that there can be no doubt that the artist intended to capture the viewer's attention. The three outermost figures on the right-hand side, whose heads and torsos, like those of most of the other figures, are turned toward the left, have noticeably sidelong glances, while another figure, beneath the pillar with the inscription, gives us a strange stare from narrowed, almost Giottesque eyes.

Now, surely no one is tempted to assume that this particular civic guard actually had three members whose eyes were askew. Obviously, Jacobsz. had a particular artistic intention in mind when he shifted all the pupils into the extreme right corners of their eyes. What he had in mind, unquestionably, was to make it clear to the viewer that the men are glancing back toward the right, in spite of the fact that their torsos are turned to the left. Those figures already turned toward the right naturally glance in that direction, and, since all of the left-oriented ones are also looking back somewhat to the right, that means all of the glances end up concentrated in a single direction in spite of the adverse body positions of most of the figures. The artist's intention, therefore, was the same as it would be in the painting of 1563, but the means were even more forced, less flexible, more objectivistic.

The same is true of the composition. Though the centralism has already been abandoned, the composition still conforms to the strict laws of a linear arrangement. The heads are set up along fairly straight diagonals in accordance with the standard, staggered-row pattern; nothing disturbs or departs from this scheme, except for the lower right-hand figure. This slight interruption is nevertheless enough to mitigate the extremely rigid impression of staggered rows that characterized the composition of the painting of 1534.

The landscape is better preserved in the painting in Saint Petersburg than in the one in Amsterdam. A rocky cliff rises up on the extreme right, to be cut off at the top by the frame. Extending to the left across the entire painting is a rolling countryside whose parts overlap diagonally. Isolated trees occupy the middle ground; rocky mountains and walled cities are seen in the distance.

Dirck Barendsz.

Jacobsz. was able to strike a balance of sorts between the conflicting tendencies in portraiture in the 1550s. However, the impression of unity that he achieved in 1563 is apparent only to the viewer who is willing to spend time and become intimate with the work. Anyone who judges it on face value will be struck by fresh contradictions. The pictorial conception is supposedly based on the idea that the musketeers are all responding to a common directional impulse, but there are noticeable exceptions to this. Its composition is supposedly based on the idea of grouping the figures in depth instead of

in a plane, yet there are no clear signs of a spatial center. It was to be Dirck Barendsz.'s contribution to group portraiture to create a convincing impression of external coherence.

According to van Mander, it was not until the early 1560s that Barendsz. returned from Venice where he had worked with Titian. So he was, then, someone who had gone from Holland to Italy to learn how to solve modern spatial problems not through the contours and movements of solid bodies but by alterations to their color. From the mere fact that Barendsz. felt the desire to go to Italy in the first place, we would expect that back in his homeland he would focus less on psychological depths than on outward perfection. And the latter is precisely what Jacobsz. lacked. Barendsz.'s two paintings of 1564 and 1566 fill in this gap, and, moreover, to such an extent that they rank in significance and influence with Jacobsz.'s creation of 1563. Let us get right to the point: Barendsz. was the first artist to establish the idea of the civic guard banquet as the basis for the pictorial conception of a group portrait, and the first one to make use of a spatial center, enclosed on all sides, for the composition.

None of the civic guard group portraits associated with Barendsz. is signed by the artist. The two we are about to discuss fall into the second series of the symbolic period and are dated 1564 and 1566. It is clear from the handling of the color alone that the earlier of the two is, of all Barendsz.'s group portraits, the one most likely to have immediately postdated his return from Titian's studio, as van Mander suggested. The painting of 1566 has so much of its paint rubbed off that not much can be said about its color treatment. It has, however, always been unanimously identified with the painting van Mander refers to as the *Porseters* (Perch eaters), and since it is best understood as a further development and refinement of the detail and composition in Barendsz.'s earlier, secure work, nothing stands in the way of our attributing it to him. Van Riemsdyck and Six ascribe two more group portraits, nos. 756 [RM no. SK-C-454] and 759 [RM no. SK-C-379] in the Rijksmuseum, to Barendsz., who died in 1592. Number 759 is dated 1588, and number 756 looks as though it belongs to the third phase of sixteenth-century group portrait painting, which began in the 1580s. For the purpose of our present inquiry, which is to ascertain the pattern of the continuous evolution, we need therefore only consider here the two works that date from the 1560s.

The Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1564 by Dirck Barendsz.

The earlier work by Barendsz. (fig. 23), no. 57 [AHM no. A 7287] in the Rijksmuseum, depicts fourteen guardsmen from Squad G of the Voetboogsdoelen. At first glance, certain aspects remind us of the painting of 1554. The composition consists of the same arrangement of heads in uniform rows which then falls out of alignment in the lower right-hand corner. And in regard to pictorial conception, there is a clear effort to obtain variety in the orientation of the heads and gazes, as well as the same unifying device of the diminutive banquet table.

Whereas there the table functioned as little more than a modest support for a pitcher and for the secretary's notebook, the one here, while not essentially larger in size, is much more clearly defined. Above all, it has been transformed into an actual dining table, stocked not only with a pitcher but also with a variety of food, plus plates, knives, napkins, and what seems to be a rectangular strongbox. Obviously there is no chance that this minuscule table could ever really accommodate all fourteen of the men present, which is why only four of them are actually gathered around it, two seated and two presumably meant to be standing. And, equally obviously, there is not nearly enough food to feed them all. Nevertheless, at least the idea of dining is now being taken seriously: one of the seated men to left of center is about to cut up a herring,[21] though, admittedly, he is directing his attention not at what he is doing but instead at the observer. The other seated man, who has a large pitcher in his left hand, is upturning a covered tankard in his right, to prove that it is empty; he, too, is not looking at what he is doing but at the viewer.

This marks the appearance of the kind of actions taken directly from genre painting that Teunissen would never have dared to include in his banquet scene of the 1530s. At the same time, however, Barendsz. has made it clear that the figures are not involved in these everyday activities for their own sake, as would have been the case in a genre painting, but only because they provide a source of unity for the group portrait. The actions are incomplete in themselves, because the viewer, who is necessary to complete them, remains outside the painting. As small a step as this introduction of a few modest genre motifs may seem, it has major implications when the evolution is considered as a whole. In the painting of 1563, Jacobsz. still avoided the everyday details of genre painting and instead unified the group essentially on the basis of symbolism. Barendsz.'s work, therefore, represents the beginning of the transformation of group portraiture from its sixteenth-century symbolic phase to the genre-based type of the seventeenth century.

This transformation is directly related to the change in the treatment of symbols. At first, the difference is barely noticeable. The men standing in the double row behind the table are holding various symbols in their hands which, by now, are very familiar: an arrow for a crossbow, a herring, a wineglass, and a piece of paper with the words "*in vino veritas*" (there is truth in wine), an obvious reference to the fraternal banquet. The only noteworthy thing at this point is that the symbols associated with the ceremonial meal are now in the majority, to the extent that even the figures not in the immediate vicinity of the table are expected to maintain the unifying symbolism of this shared activity. In the upper right-hand corner, we even find one recurrence of the time-honored symbol of touching hands.

There is one symbolic gesture, however, that is decidedly less emphatic, if in fact that is what it is at all, namely, pointing. The second figure from left in the upper row is holding his right hand over his neighbor's arm so that it looks as if he means to point to the arrow—the weapon of their guild—in his neighbor's right hand. Similarly, the hand of the first man on the right in the

Fig. 23. Dirck Barendsz.
Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1564
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Fig. 24. Dirck Barendsz.
Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1566
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

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upper row is extended toward his neighbor's glass, though he is also holding a glove in the very same hand. The act of pointing is so minimally and weakly expressed in both cases that it may have been intended simply as an example of the motif of touching hands.

Pointing had always had the function of drawing the viewer's attention in an eye-catching way to something that was contributing to the unity of the group portrait, such as a symbol or one of the officers. In Barendsz.'s painting of 1566, a work with many more figures, pointing does not occur at all. This is especially significant in view of the fact that, with the sole exception of the painting of 1531 by an unknown artist, the gesture is included in every single one of the paintings we have dealt with up to 1563, and that precisely in Jacobsz.'s work of that year, pointing occurs in such an insistent way. The disappearance of a gesture that had been virtually obligatory up to that point must therefore signal that some other aspect of the old pictorial conception has also given way to something new.

Let us recall what this gesture signified. Above all, it served to alert the viewing subject—who, as I have said, had not yet been conceived of as a single individual—to the presence of an object, thereby underscoring the fact that there are two sides to visual art: subject and object. Both the artist and the public felt the need at that time to have this duality clearly and unambiguously expressed. Barendsz.'s decision to suppress a gesture that was a direct manifestation of that duality shows how, during the period he was active, group portraiture in Holland began to place less value on the clear definition of that duality. The assumption of a viewing subject for a painting was no longer new; the idea was already well established in the minds of the public in Holland, so there was no longer any need to insist on it. Added to the introduction of genre motifs from everyday life discussed earlier, the disappearance of pointing is a second sign that the pictorial conception of the group portrait in Holland is becoming more and more subjective, and that Baroque dualism is being replaced by a growing tendency to subjectivize the object.

A further sign in this direction is the unprecedented idea of turning some of the figures physically away from the viewer, so that only their backs are showing and they communicate only with their gazes; but more of this later, apropos of composition.

In the orientation of these gazes, Barendsz. did not follow Jacobsz.'s lead and use them to establish a unifying sense of intimacy; instead, he took the example of Teunissen and the unknown artist of 1554, both of whom also made use of physical movement to achieve their new artistic goals. Barendsz., too, was after greater variety, so he showed his figures glancing in a wide range of directions instead of focusing their gazes within a small circle. There is, however, a certain amount of regularity to the pattern of the gazes, alternating as they do—almost without exception—between straight ahead and sideways. Extreme turning of the head is avoided, with three remarkable exceptions: the first two are the seated guardsmen whose momentary (subjective) action the artist apparently felt compelled to counterbalance with the

objectivity of a particularly emphatic turn toward the viewer (a demonstra-tion of dualism). The third example is the leftmost fellow in the lower row who has his torso turned toward his comrade (more about this later in the dis-cussion of the composition) and, as a result, has to turn to face the viewer.

Normally, one would not expect an artist such as Barendsz., who was pri-marily preoccupied with manipulating the physical aspects of the painting, to concern himself with the emotional possibilities of the facial features. Surpris-ingly, however, he does just this in a number of heads, such as the third man from right in the upper row. On the other hand, it is impossible for Barendsz. to conceal the fact that he studied in Italy, because he has an unmistakable ten-dency to idealize and is always looking for ways to give more elegant charac-teristics to the sitters' faces and postures, and even to slip a distinctly Southern regularity into their features.

Barendsz. avoids subordination in his pictorial conception. If we decide to single out the two seated figures in the foreground as captain and officer, we do so only because of their prominent placement, and because their sub-jective, momentary actions attract the viewer's attention more than what the others are doing. Otherwise, there is actually nothing about the figures them-selves that identifies them as having any authority over the others.

A comparison to the painting of 1554 can aid our examination of the com-position. The idea behind both paintings is fundamentally an arrangement of vertical members in horizontal rows that falls out of alignment to the lower right, thus allowing room for an object that is not a figure, namely, the little table. One is almost tempted to assume that Barendsz. directly modeled his work on the earlier one, which could have given him a number of other ideas as well.

It is fair to say, however, that the table in the earlier painting looks uncom-fortably jammed into the crowd of figures, and it contains only the germ of a spatial center. The little table in Barendsz.'s painting, on the other hand, man-ages to assert itself as a true spatial center. The figures surrounding it are no longer arranged only on the right and left, that is, in a plane, but all around it in a complete circle, just as they were in Geertgen's relic-burning episode. The circle is complete even on the side closest to the viewer, where the figure in the lower right-hand corner sits with his back to the viewer in an armchair of which only the backrest is visible. This figure's counterpart in the painting of 1554 had already begun to depart from strictly frontal objectivity by turning his profile to the viewer. One need only compare the two to appreciate how the composition of 1564, like the pictorial conception, represents a crucial transition, and how its innovative aspects are unquestionably the logical results of a conscious, step-by-step process of evolution.

The crossbowman in the lower right-hand corner is not the only one with his back to the viewer. In the lower row, to the left of the group at the table, two figures are also shown seated (not standing, like the figures in the upper row). The one on the left sits opposite his neighbor with his back half-turned to the viewer. There is no question that the figure on the left is in a sitting

position, because the leg of his breeches extends all the way over to the seated figure with the herring. I even think I have found traces of the backrest of his chair beneath the overpainting that has muddied up this part of the painting. The position of the other chair in relation to the first one is also not in question, since the left hand of this figure is clearly resting on the front end of an armrest. Of course, it is hard for us moderns to understand how two people could ever fit into such a narrow space. Barendsz., however, was concentrating on the figures and how he could distribute them in space, but not on the free space between them. If he had been concerned with the latter, he probably never would have gone to Italy, where the emphasis was exclusively on the movement of figures in space as such, but would have instead decided to learn from someone like Dirk Jacobsz.

Barendsz.'s relative indifference to the typically Northern preoccupation with painting free space also accounts for a few of his compositional idiosyncrasies. For example, he obviously has a preference for the kind of centralized arrangements that Jacobsz. had already overcome: the middle figure in each seven-man row functions as the center, and, in the case of the upper row, the heads curve down to either side at about the same rate. However, the central figure is nowhere used to establish a genuinely subordinating arrangement.

Secondly, Barendsz. leaves almost no space between the figures, so that they seem to be competing with each other for room. Of course, the crowding here is not nearly as bad as it was for the painting of 1554, where we try in vain to imagine where there would be room for the bodies attached to the many heads that are visible. Barendsz. always conscientiously includes at least a bit of the torso, even for the figures in the back row, and the year before Jacobsz. had already granted his figures a significant amount of elbowroom. Here, however, there is no free space to the left or right; only at the top, above the heads of the back row of guardsmen, is there a little more room than has been found previously in any group portrait set in an interior. This, of course, is an echo of the intention to relieve the horizontal pressure from above to allow freer movement upward.

This is also the simplest explanation for the apparent paradox of why an artist who was so good at localizing and distributing his foreground figures so convincingly in space, and at grouping them around a spatial center that was not just another figure, came to neglect the background of the painting completely. The only reason that we are justified in reading the neutral surface behind the upper row of crossbowmen as a wall is that there is a piece of paper bearing the squad's identifying letter nailed into the upper right-hand corner, with a date appearing on the other side. It is, of course, completely understandable that an artist like Barendsz. would, apparently, decline on principle to integrate his figures within a landscape.

Barendsz.'s treatment of color values is naturally soft, as befits a pupil of the Venetians; in this respect at least, he has something in common with Jacobsz. He avoids the use of shadows as an aid to modeling, though he nonetheless employs conspicuous cast shadows, most obviously the one cast

on the forehead of the man in the armchair in the lower right-hand corner by his cap. An area like this definitely heralds the chiaroscuro to come. Because, however, the shadow is still clearly demarcated — and obviously associated with a tangible, discrete object rather than hovering in free space with undefined edges — it occupies a place halfway between the two kinds of shadows defined earlier, the shadows associated with solid objects and spatial shadows.

The Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1566 by Dirck Barendsz.

In the painting of 1564, only four of the men were related to the banquet table by the meal itself, while the remaining ten were included only by virtue of symbols. In marked contrast to this, Barendsz.'s painting of Squad L of the Kloveniersdoelen from 1566, traditionally nicknamed the *Perch Eaters*,[22] allows no fewer than fourteen of the nineteen guardsmen to participate directly in the banquet, while four of the remaining five figures have at least some form of loose connection with the theme of the common meal. Only one single individual, in the extreme upper left-hand corner, stares idly out of the painting. And — to continue with our comparison — whereas only four people were gathered around the spatial center in Barendsz.'s earlier painting, now every single one of the individuals involved, without exception, is grouped around the central table. A comparison with Teunissen's banquet of 1533 reveals some drastic changes: the point of view in Barendsz.'s work is considerably lower, the back row of standing men has been eliminated, and the guardsmen are now seated on all four sides of the table. These are the things that make the painting seem so real and come so close to our everyday subjective visual experience.

The whole range of symbols found previously in these group portraits — both the hand gestures of touching or pointing, and the objects such as weapons, writing implements, and the like — have disappeared; only a single one remains: the banquet itself. Even the piece of paper that one of the men is holding probably symbolizes the music of the round that was sung around the table at such fraternal banquets. There is even a person included in the activities who is not a member of the group, namely, the serving woman who is bringing in the food. By exploiting the idea of the civic guard banquet, Barendsz. has created a far more unified pictorial conception than Jacobsz. achieved with his one-directional marching motif. As far as the spatial composition is concerned, there are now three people in the foreground who turn their backs to the viewer, closing the circle. Thus, the advances in subjectivity observed in 1564, both in pictorial conception and in composition, are all logically pursued and developed here. It is time to assess how much objectivity manages to survive in the face of all these growing subjective tendencies.

A good way of bringing the remaining objective elements into focus is to ask whether the men in the painting are behaving as we would normally expect of people eating a meal. A couple of them are holding a glass or a pitcher in one hand, but this motif is already familiar to us from the earlier,

symbolic approach. A man on the left is cutting a roll in two, a genrelike activity akin to the filleting of the herring in the painting of 1564. The odd thing for the modern viewer is that, even in this momentary act of cutting, the guardsman focuses his attention not on the object, or even on the action he is performing, but on some indefinable point in the distance. Even the servant, who must surely be in a hurry, to judge by the way she is holding out plates of herring at arm's length to the guests, is looking out of the frame in the direction opposite her gesture.

Hence, it is precisely because the figures are not concentrating on what they are doing that their actions lose their subjective, genrelike character and regain an objective, symbolic quality; and that is true even for the kinds of activities that naturally fall into the genre category. One of the men seated to the right of center is especially typical of the artistic volition of Holland at this stage in its evolution: his arms are crossed over his chest, and he is holding a knife, the symbol of his participation in the banquet; nevertheless, his head is turned attentively to one side. The artist has obviously and intentionally suppressed all signs of active participation in the activity of eating, at the same time focusing on the sitter's attentiveness, which operates on a psychological level, as expressed by the crossed arms and the turn of the head toward the side. Of course, we will never know exactly what this individual is so attentive to — whether to the words of the man standing behind him or to the figures in the opposite corner — and we were probably never meant to know. The artist never meant to depict attentiveness that could be localized in time and space, as in genre painting, but rather the kind of attentiveness that is objective, absolute, and entirely symbolic.

This requisite element of group portraiture was achieved either by having all of the guardsmen portrayed as focused on a more limited and unified point, as was the case with Jacobsz., or, like Teunissen and the unknown artist of 1554, on more varied and widespread points. Not once, however, were they permitted to look directly at each other. Barendsz. seems generally to be observing this rule in the painting of 1566 as well, with two partial exceptions that turn out to have enormous implications for the future.

There are, namely, two instances in the painting where, for the first time, two figures directly interact with each other. The first involves the man to the left of center who has placed his right hand on the arm of the central, presiding figure, while pointing with his left hand directly toward the viewer. There is no possible explanation for these actions except that the man on the left is trying to bring something to the attention of the central figure, and for that reason, has turned his head in his neighbor's direction. Now, the gesture is admittedly not as emphatic or as unequivocal as the artist could have made it, had he had a mind to; nevertheless, the crucial thing to note here is that the figure who is thus addressed is ignoring the appeal completely, choosing instead to focus his attention in a totally different direction. An unprecedented form of interaction has thus been introduced into the repertory of devices deemed appropriate for group portraiture, but it remains completely

one-sided; and, because it lacks the consummation appropriate to a genre painting, it maintains its symbolic character. We see a cause but no effect; we are certain that the men interact with each other in some way, but we are presented with no specific reason, anchored in time and space, for the interaction.

The second, even more drastic example of this sort of one-sided relationship involves the third man from left in the row that slants upward from the bottom of the painting. He has turned vigorously to one side, holding out a drinking glass and evidently proposing a toast. There is absolutely no question about what he is doing; but many difficulties arise about how to interpret the situation further, since it is not even clear which of his neighbors he means to toast. It is clear at this point, after two instances of this kind, that the ambivalence of the one-sided relationship is no accident, but something intentional on the part of the artist. Once again, the important thing to note is the lack of any reaction in the other individuals involved: the immediate neighbor of the man with the glass quietly goes on cutting his bread, while the man at the end looks imperturbably ahead.

Finally, two other figures should also be viewed in this light; their attention seems to be focused on what is going on around them, but it would be impossible to say, on a psychological level, precisely where. These are the one standing just to right of center, and the second one in from the upper left-hand corner.

Let us summarize what we have observed thus far. Barendsz. was the artist who succeeded, more than any of the others we have dealt with earlier, in taking various symbolic activities and reinterpreting them in a way associated with genre painting. The actions of some of his figures have such a momentary nature that they could pass for a glimpse of the visible world as seen by the eyes of a viewing subject. On the other hand, however, what the figures are doing is never self-contained; their actions are never carried through. The expected effect or response is always missing, so that despite the extremely subjective aspects, the basic conception remains essentially symbolic.

The strange thing is that, even though the figures are not interacting in the way we would normally expect, the whole scene still looks so real, so subjectively satisfying. One tends simply to overlook at first glance the absolute, stereotyped, lifeless quality of the figures. This miracle is achieved through the attentiveness that makes all of them seem so psychologically active, though we are never quite sure about what. It is precisely paintings such as this one, with its subtle way of expressing attentiveness in each of the figures, that teach us to understand why the painters of Holland, who specialized in exploiting this particular human quality, were the only artists to succeed in solving the problems inherent in group portraiture.

The objective compositional devices that Barendsz. enlisted to balance the subjective ones are also easy to identify. On the one hand, there is a substantial spatial center that is not one of the figures but which has free space above it and serves to unite the figures. On the other hand, the figures are also clearly integrated into a planar composition through the use of clear symme-

try. Three people are seated on the long side of the table opposite the viewer. Barendsz. has illuminated the head of the central figure more brightly than the others, given it more character, and made it the center of the planar aspects of the composition. The placement of this individual, together with his greater presence, creates a certain impression of subordination, so that it is probably fair to assume, even in the absence of any other clues to confirm our suspicions, that he is the captain. The full force of this figure's objective power of subordination, however, is immediately compromised by the taller figure standing beside him.

There are four figures on each of the narrow sides of the table, seated along diagonals that recede symmetrically into space. The two figures standing behind these two oblique rows on either side are also diagonally arranged. Finally, the three foreground figures on the long side of the table facing the viewer show us their backs. Thanks to the spaces left between these figures, we have a view of the tabletop, partly covered by a tablecloth, with its food, drink, and dishes. Two things serve to keep the table's perspectival foreshortening, in itself an eminently subjective device, in objective line: the strict symmetry of the arrangement and the way the foreshortening is exaggerated. This exaggeration functions like a hand gesture in that it calls the viewer's attention to the fact that there is a subject as well as an object. By exaggerating the perspective, therefore, the artist is demonstrating that his standpoint in this matter, too, is that of Baroque dualism. Furthermore, the two groups of four figures seated on either end of the table are so crowded that in reality they would have no room at all, which also contributes to the impression of symmetry, and thus to objectivity.

Besides perspectival foreshortening, a number of other details help create the illusion of depth. Most noteworthy are the three foreground figures whose backs and faces are turned toward the viewer. In particular, the dark suit of the middle figure creates a dark silhouette against the white of the tablecloth, effectively pushing it, as well as the back row of figures, farther back in space. Having accomplished this, the tablecloth had apparently fulfilled its function, for Barendsz. did not bother to have it extend over the entire tabletop. No doubt that would have given him too much white.

Although the portrait heads, almost all bearded, have been heavily abraded, there is still enough of them left to allow us to determine that they were characterized by strong contrasts of light and shadow. If we compare the use of shadow to that used for the heads in the painting of 1557, it is clear that the earlier emphasis on tactile modeling has given way to increased variety in the color values of the surfaces. The headgear is still the traditional cap, with the exception of a single hat and two bare-headed individuals. Finally, the background of this painting, compared to that of 1557, is better defined, because there are two pilasters that stand out from the uniform surface and thus identify it as a solid wall. Of course, if we try to weigh subjectively in our minds the distance between the wall and the men, we cannot expect any clues from the artist. Barendsz. was simply not concerned with depicting

the free space between the figures; he was still far too much of an objectivist for that.

The last thing to discuss is the tilted head position of the man we have presumed to be the captain. There are two remarkable things about it: first of all, for the composition, it signals a departure from a strict vertical axis and a growing preference for diagonals; secondly, in regard to the pictorial conception, it adds a wide range of conceptual possibilities to the pure, absolute attentiveness that had prevailed up to this point. These are the tendencies that we began to note in Jacobsz.'s works and, albeit in a different way, even in the civic guard group portrait of 1554 by an unknown artist. As discussed earlier, what these artists sought in adopting such devices was to achieve a more individualized form of attentiveness. It was not until the second period of its evolution, however, that the group portraiture of Holland began to take full advantage of the unifying potential of the diagonal in the composition and the no less unifying effect of emotions in the pictorial conception.

The Emergence and Significance of Genre Painting in Holland

The purpose of religious history painting in the Middle Ages was to represent objective norms, primarily as illustrated by scenes from the life of Christ, but also by episodes from the lives of the saints. Simply by following these norms, an individual could hope to achieve salvation. The great change in attitude that took place in the sixteenth century consisted of the transfer of the driving force behind redemptive morality to the individual. Salvation was no longer considered a gift from elsewhere: subjective, inward peace of mind was now the reward of selfless conduct in relation to the rest of the world; mental anguish was the punishment for selfishness.

A new form of dualism developed in the nations that remained Catholic, which, of course, included the Romance peoples. It still clung anxiously to the existing ethical norms, with all of their consequences, but subjective feeling began to receive a certain degree of recognition. In the world of art, there was a corresponding dualism of religious and secular art, notably in Italy and Flanders. On the other hand, the Protestants, who were mostly of Germanic stock, took a more one-sided, uncompromising line by shifting the responsibility for the norm squarely onto the individual. Of course, the idea of a supreme ethical Lawgiver lived on; however, He now spoke to human beings directly, not through intermediaries. In art, the natural consequence was the elimination of the kind of religious image that depicted an objective world completely separate from and alien to that of the subjective viewer. Protestants replaced it with a secular art that was intended to convey individual, subjective experience.

This shift toward secular art in Protestant Germanic regions coincided with the last years of the first period of group portraiture in Holland, which was the time of violent crisis that we refer to as the period of iconoclasm. This crisis consisted essentially of a violent rejection of religious art. Although the artists of Holland did not give up painting traditional sacred images entirely,

there is a definite shift of emphasis in their work after the period of icono-clasm, for they began to conceive of their religious paintings more and more in terms of subjective experiences accessible to the viewer and less as objective events divorced from the personal realm. One need only think of Rembrandt in this context. His religious works depict ordinary occurrences that could happen to anyone in everyday life. The selfless devotion expressed by the people involved, however, elevates them to a plane on which they are able to participate in the eternal and the divine. In the visual arts, we use the term *genre* to describe this way of handling great historical events.

The essential characteristic of a genre painting is not so much the apparent meaninglessness of the incident depicted, but the urgent inner necessity with which it is carried out before the viewer's eyes. When artists first began to paint genre subjects, they insisted, as they always do when trying out new ideas, on drawing that inner necessity to the viewer's attention. As a result, they chose themes that, though devoid of historical significance, were unusual in themselves, so that the viewer felt compelled to ask why it was painted in the first place, and eventually figured out the irresistible necessity of the unusual event.

Bruegel the Elder's paintings of peasants can be explained in this way. For the urban population, the behavior of country folk was outlandish and vulgar, and therefore unusual. Bruegel, however, was able to depict these peasants in a way that gave the viewer the inescapable impression that they could not behave otherwise. As a result, the shocking and unusual aspects of his peasants' antics suddenly made sense and became true and clear, so that the work took on the redeeming quality that viewers expect from a work of art. In this way, genre painting put everyday life on an equal footing with the eternal, whereas earlier history painting had been based on the assumption that the eternal could be expressed only through extraordinary events.

In order to depict scenes containing the kind of urgent inner necessity that is the essential characteristic of genre painting, artists first had to learn how to refine the psychological expression of their figures, something that would have been impossible before the sixteenth century. The way Bruegel's peasants behave seems natural and convincing to us only because the artist was supremely capable of capturing their expressions and gestures in a moment of psychological truth. Part of this process involved observing human nature, specifically, attentiveness, a human quality that neither antique nor even Italian Renaissance art had exploited. At this point in history, only the Netherlanders were in a position to found a tradition of true genre painting and, at the same time, to introduce aspects of genre into historical composi-tions and — as we will soon see — into group portraiture.

In the second phase of the first, symbolic period of group portraiture in Amsterdam, which we have just finished discussing, there were a few instances where genrelike details were incorporated into the pictorial conception of some of the group portraits. Contemporaneously, Netherlandish genre paint-ing, whose roots extended far back into the fifteenth century, was reaching

its crucial phase of development. The two artists responsible for giving genre painting a definitive form and an independent life were Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Pieter Aertsen.

Bruegel's art is important in two ways. On the one hand, it is the culmination of the preceding evolution in the Netherlands as a whole; on the other, it is also the germ of the two distinct traditions that subsequently developed, those of Flanders and Holland. The Flemish characteristics naturally dominate: the matchless way in which the indefatigable Bruegel captures physical movements and links them with their appropriate psychological sensations makes him a worthy predecessor of Rubens. On the other hand, his keen insight into the nuances of human physiognomy and its endless potential for expression, as seen for example in the heads of his peasants, puts him in line with Rembrandt. More precisely, he is close to the young Rembrandt, who — possibly in conscious competition with the Flemish — never tired of exploring, particularly in his etchings, the ways in which strong emotions affect the muscles of the face. Later on, in works such as *The Hundred Guilder Etching, La petite tombe,* and *The Staalmeesters,* the older Rembrandt plunged much farther than Bruegel into the depths of the human soul, just as Rubens ultimately surpassed his sixteenth-century predecessor in the depiction of physical movement.

Bruegel's work is the point of departure for Flemish genre painting — in fact, for all subsequent Flemish painting in general, with the exception of the purely religious kind. He is important for art in Holland only insofar as later artists made use of his work when they were interested in improving the expressive character of their figures. It was Pieter Aertsen, nicknamed "Tall Pete," who laid the actual foundations for the genre painting specific to Holland. To appreciate the difference between these two artists, one need only compare paintings in which they handled similar subject matter. The figures in Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding* and *Peasant Dance* in the Court Museum in Vienna either directly interact with each other or, when broken down into groups, are treated in a way that still leads us to believe unconditionally in their spontaneous coexistence. The various episodes that make up Aertsen's *Egg Dance* in the Rijksmuseum, on the other hand, seem almost completely unrelated to each other. Whereas one of Bruegel's main concerns — and in this respect he was no different from Italian artists — was for the action to establish internal coherence (that is, of action), Aertsen to a great extent leaves it to the subjective viewer to impose (external) coherence on the figures' actions. Consequently, the figures in Aertsen's genre paintings are isolated psychologically from each other, and thus demand a direct connection with the viewer; this is the same situation already observed in Geertgen's *Legend of Saint John,* which we recognized as the earliest basis for group portraiture in Holland.

The Identity of Pictorial Conception in Genre and
Group Portrait Painting in Holland

It is far beyond the scope of this book to prove systematically that the basic principles governing group portraiture in Holland were the same as those affecting all other categories of painting in Holland. In view of the important role played by the new invention of genre painting, however, I think we are justified for once in stepping briefly outside our original scope to demonstrate that Aertsen's pictorial conception as a genre painter is the same one used by the painters of group portraits.[23]

Market Scene in the Imperial Gallery in Vienna (no. 705 [now Kunsthistorisches Museum, no. 960], fig. 25) shows a man seated in the foreground selling chickens. He seems to be attentively watching for customers, but, instead of taking advantage of the three who are visible in the painting, he gazes out toward the viewer. He has obviously just sold a brace of birds to the maidservant standing behind him to the left, who, satisfied with her purchase, is holding it up high in her left hand for the benefit of the observer. Aertsen, therefore, intentionally isolated the very figures that would have had the most natural and obvious relationship with each other, and then brought them each into separate contact with the viewer; Bruegel would certainly have related them to each other in some way. The pictorial conception of group portraiture in Holland, as we have already noted, follows this same principle: external coherence takes precedence over internal coherence.

In the background are two figures who have a somewhat more intimate relationship with each other, although one of them, the servant, is looking in the direction of the viewer. Both of them are gesticulating at each other at the same time in a way typical of Holland, as first observed in Geertgen's relic-burning scene: because they are subordinating themselves to each other, they end up being coordinated.

One is tempted to wonder how an artist with this sort of fundamental approach would respond if given the task of depicting two people in a close, erotic relationship. Conveniently enough, a work by Aertsen in the Imperial Gallery in Vienna (no. 703 [now no. 3572], fig. 26) can answer this question. Although both participants are giving fairly tangible signs of mutual emotional inclinations, it does not occur to them to look at each other. On the contrary, the man looks frontally out at the viewer, as though sitting for a portrait. He is completely immersed in his tactile experience and has no interest in seeing anything objective around him. The girl's lowered glance, on the other hand, betrays a guilty, embarrassed conscience and thus a deeper inward emotion.

To see what is specific to Holland in the way Aertsen handled the erotic theme, it suffices to compare it with the Flemish version, as in Rubens' *Croc en jambe* in the Pinakothek in Munich (fig. 27). Whereas Aertsen reduces everything to emotion, Rubens transforms everything into action. The male is devoting all of his energies to the female object of conquest, whose resistance to his advances is obviously not meant to be taken seriously. Her face,

Fig. 25. Pieter Aertsen
Market Scene
Vienna, Imperial Court Museum

Fig. 26. Pieter Aertsen
Pair of Lovers
Vienna, Imperial Court Museum

Fig. 27. Rubens
Pair of Lovers
Munich, Pinakothek

however — in a way that comes naturally to Rubens as a Northerner — is by no means devoid of psychological depth, since it clearly and delightfully conveys the policy that she is pursuing in response to the man's advances. In no way does she seem to be suffering from guilt which Rubens (unlike van Dyck) avoided on principle. Furthermore, Aertsen keeps the objects of erotic desire chastely clothed, to be subjectively imagined by the viewer, while Rubens largely lays them bare and makes them explicit. So we find the Flemish master consistently preoccupied with unity and objectivity, whereas the Hollander goes out of his way to involve the viewing subject's emotion and experience.

The Second Period of
Group Portraiture in Holland,
1580–1624

A second hiatus in the history of civic guard group portraits in Amsterdam occurs after 1566, and it is tempting to attribute it to the political and religious unrest of the time. Amsterdam, however, thanks to the wise and cautious policies of its governors, did not suffer much from the general turmoil, and we have sufficient evidence to demonstrate that painters continued to paint unabated in Holland even in the worst of times. It was only the devotional painting required by churches that began to suffer a setback, because, even though it had been the most important form of commission in the fifteenth century, the newly dominant Reformed Church offered no commissions for church painting. This is all the more reason to expect portrait painting to have experienced an upswing of some sort, but this proved true only for portraits of individuals. In the case of group portraiture, production ceased between 1567 and the early 1580s. To understand why this was so, one would have to delve much more deeply into possible causes and above all to identify the kinds of secular painting that were coming into favor in Holland at the same time. I will have to defer such study, however, to a future time; at present, let me elaborate on one external factor that had a bearing on the situation.

Originally, civic guards were not purely civic organizations but had religious affiliations as well, as witnessed by their association with particular saints. During the span of time that we are discussing, this type of religious patronage ceased completely in Holland, though it continued in the Southern Netherlands, which remained Catholic. In the North, the civic guards instead took on a military character, though they retained their civic base throughout this change. The old marksmen's guilds now turned into companies organized along military lines, becoming citizen's militias whose first duty was to protect the city, but which, in isolated cases, were also expected to go into battle. Just like the old marksmen's guilds, however, the membership of these new, more militarized civic guards was made up of free citizens who enjoyed equal rights and joined the group of their own accord to support a common purpose. Notwithstanding, the military purpose of these civic guards, which remained a serious one until after the signing of the Peace of Westphalia, necessarily called for a higher degree of subordination. The immediate effect on group portraiture is that we are never again left in doubt about who is the commanding officer. From now on, the captain, the lieutenant, and the

standard-bearer are the three ranks that are almost always represented as clearly as one could wish.

This in itself reveals one of the fundamentally new things about group portraiture in this second period of evolution that begins after 1580: we can expect, in principle, a greater degree of subordination within the group. Subordination, as we know, is a device associated with antique and Italian art. It stands in sharp contrast to the coordinate arrangement preferred by Northern artists, who therefore kept subordination well under control in the earliest examples of group portraiture from the first period dating between 1529 and 1566, though they were not averse to trying it out on a fairly regular basis. It would be a mistake, however, to think that the new, higher degree of subordination in the second period of group portraiture is a direct result of the new form of military organization of the civic guards. The fact is that both of them are parallel reflections of the larger forces that were at work in Holland at this time on many levels, both social and artistic, and which in general encouraged the stricter subordination of parts to the dominant whole as a more desirable expression of group unity.

The disintegration and reorganization of the old guilds took place slowly over a period of time. And it is no wonder that the guilds had no great incentive to commission works of art during this period of transformation when their very foundations were in a state of flux. By 1580 the reorganization of the civic guards in Amsterdam was essentially complete, and a series of paintings, some of which are dated, documents the first attempts to come to terms with the new spirit of the times: for example, no. 758 [RM no. SK-C-425] in the Rijksmuseum showing the corporalship of Dirk Jacobsz. Rosecrans,[24] dated 1584 and attributed in the catalog to Cornelis Ketel, as well as no. 759 [RM no. SK-C-379] dated 1588, which van Riemsdyck and Six consider to be Dirck Barendsz.'s (last) work. Both of these works attempt to combine composition based on rows with a more spatial arrangement, as well as to combine a symbolic conception with a momentary, subjective expressiveness by means of livelier physical movements, while at the same time introducing a stronger form of subordination.

A signed group portrait of 1588 by Cornelis Ketel, no. 754 [RM no. SK-C-378] in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 28), of the corporalship of Captain Rosecrans— the same individual who had himself and his men painted in 1584—has, however, already advanced beyond that initial, unavoidable stage of experimentation. The unprecedented fact that the men are depicted as full-length figures tells us at a glance that we are entering completely new territory. Now, it is generally true that the half-length figure always enjoyed primacy in group portraiture, even later in its history, and for obvious reasons: the artists of Holland did not want anything to compete with the face of the sitter, least of all the legs, which suggest movement and thus can easily become a source of distraction. For them, the face was the mirror of the soul and by far the most important aspect of any portrait. The fact that Ketel dared at this point to include the lower body signals an earth-shattering change in the pictorial

Fig. 28. Cornelis Ketel
Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1588
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

conception. It also tells us immediately that Ketel's artistic concerns did not lie so much in a subjective intensification and elaboration of the psychological level of his figures but more in that of their physical appearance.

The Corporalship of Captain Dirk Jacobsz. Rosecrans by Cornelis Ketel

Once again, let us first take a look at the pictorial conception that is responsible for tying the members of the group together into an internally coherent unit. At first glance, the figures do not seem to be involved in any particular shared activity that would allow us to assume a common motivation of any sort: they are standing around confidently and casually, looking about here and there, sometimes at the viewer but never at each other. There are no signs of a banquet or of any swearing-in ceremony. This forces us to examine each man individually for what he is doing. We soon discover that each of them, without exception, is holding a weapon of some sort in one of his hands. Whenever one of their hands is out in the open and visible, the other hand is always idle, with just one exception. The weapons come in a wide variety, some defensive, some offensive: lances, shields, muskets, flambergs, daggers. The only type missing is the crossbow, a good indication that the original association of the guilds with one of the three basic weapons had now been totally lost, as Rosecrans's company belonged to the Voetboogsdoelen. The most noteworthy thing is that weapons are no longer restricted to a select few, as they had been previously in their symbolic function, because they have ceased to act like symbols. That is, as attributes of the figures, they lose their absolute and objective qualities, and become individualized and subjective. They create the kind of fleeting impression that a subjective viewer might glimpse at any given moment. Moreover, they do not seem to suggest a single historical event, as do the palm fronds held by the pilgrims to the Holy Sepulcher, but a frequently repeated scene from everyday life. This, by itself, is already a good indication of the extent to which the pictorial conception of Ketel's group portrait has moved away from symbolic thinking. And, of course, we have already seen from Dirck Barendsz.'s painting of 1566 how the evolution of the first period already prepared the way for this departure.

What lends the image the impression of coherence in the absence of symbols? The impression of coherence is, literally, handed to us by the one guardsman who, unlike the others, is in fact doing something besides holding a weapon. This is the man in the dark suit left of center who seems to be walking in from the side. His sash immediately attracts our attention, and Ketel has made every effort to thrust him prominently into the foreground, so that we at once identify him as Captain Rosecrans himself. In his lowered right hand he holds a spear, all the while looking out at the viewer and pointing with his index finger and thumb to the two other men standing with him in the foreground, one of them the standard-bearer and the other identifiable by his sash as the lieutenant. These two react appropriately to the captain's gesture by turning, as he does, toward the viewer, quite unlike the rest of the men, who direct their attention in a variety of ways. Therefore, the three men

in the foreground seem to have established a rapport among themselves that requires only one more component to qualify as a genre subject: the viewer. That is supplied by the obvious meaning behind the action: that the captain is introducing the lieutenant and the standard-bearer to a third party (or to several), so that we now have all the requisite ingredients of a coherent genre painting. At the same time, however, the character of the group portrait is preserved, because the third party is not visible in the picture but located outside it.

The rest of the men are all, at least indirectly, involved in the captain's introduction, so that we can justifiably refer to this new genre motif in group portraiture as a "presentation." It is unlikely, however, that presentations of this kind ever took place in reality, and, if they did, probably they would not have looked anything like this. Therefore, the pictorial conception of the work is still basically symbolic, that is, not subjective and not realistic, in spite of a few qualities that begin to make it look like genre painting. Now, the presentation motif is based on subordination, because the coherence of the whole revolves exclusively around the captain. On the other hand, the varied, self-assured poses of the figures reveal once again a tendency toward coordination, as they are obviously not under command but rather acting on their own private initiative. Finally, the presentation motif as such is specific to Holland, because the action consists of one figure bringing something to the attention of another (and, moreover, in this case to the viewer).

The angle of most of the heads is not vertical but somewhat oblique. We associate tilting of the head like this with an expression of emotion that breaks with the position of rigid verticality dictated by an expression of will. We have already encountered in Jacobsz. a tendency to combine attentiveness with emotion in his portrait heads; he did this mainly by more highly refining the physiognomy of his sitters, though he also allowed them to bow their heads slightly on occasion. The same can be said of Barendsz. Now, however, Ketel is keenly interested in heightening the expression of emotion not by animating the features to a greater extent but instead by conspicuously and physically tilting the heads at an angle. The way the figures' bodies generally bend and turn, something we will discuss again later when we come to the composition, also contributes to the heightened emotional expression of the pictorial conception, which, in the last analysis, is nothing more than a reflection of the Baroque conflict between will and emotion that has been inherent in Italian sculpture and painting since Michelangelo.

For the first time in the history of the group portrait, the composition is bounded not only by a background behind the figures but also by a floor below them. That is why I would like to make an exception to our usual procedure by dealing first with the setting instead of with the figures. The scene is located out-of-doors, for the background is filled with the facade of a palace that is not likely to be the actual guildhall of the company. Everything we see has the marks of conscious, imaginative invention that are characteristic of Ketel's work. The flat front of the building lies well back in space, while

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imposing wings project forward to either side, cut off by the width of the frame. In addition, the wing on the left side boasts two columns and a surface covered with a variety of overhangs and moldings. The artist's intention was obviously to highlight as much as possible the tangible qualities of the architecture, the parts that occupy space and project solidly out of the background.[25] The floor on which the men are standing consists of tiles in a checkerboard pattern in two shades of blue; arranged according to the laws of perspective, it projects into the foreground toward the viewer, as the facade of the palace also does. Therefore, even though Ketel was accentuating the background and the setting of his figures to a much greater extent than any artist before him, we must keep in mind that he was not yet thinking in terms of a static framework of space, but of an animated framework of solids.

Now let us take a look at the figures. This is really the first time they look as though they are receding into space, with some in front and the others behind;[26] for, even in Barendsz.'s banquet of 1566, we still find two figures standing in each of the corners behind the rows of seated figures without any particular reason for being situated in space above everyone else. Stacking figures vertically on top of each other was, as it were, the symbolic way of expressing the idea that they were situated behind each other in space.

Nevertheless, even in the case of Ketel's painting, the viewing subject is still forced to choose a standpoint according to the demands of the depicted object, and not vice versa, as would be true if the treatment were strictly subjective. For example, the four figures on the left are arranged in a staggered, diagonal row going up and back into space, with each head slightly higher than the one before, instead of receding downward the way they would in normal visual experience. This kind of arrangement makes subjective visual sense only when we imagine ourselves viewing it from a vantage point much higher than we are generally used to at average human height. It is related to the antique device of rendering things from a bird's-eye perspective as if they were flattened down on the earth, which then serves as a background, so that things which are normally distributed through space are unified in a single plane. This perspective by itself is already a clear indication that, in spite of Ketel's increased attention to subjective spatial illusion, his composition on the whole retains the essential features of planar composition. One need only recall the checkerboard tile pattern, which tilts up much more steeply than it would in normal visual experience, and therefore assumes a higher-than-usual standpoint for the viewer.

If we now ask ourselves which of the two types of compositional possibilities — objective, symmetrical, and planar or subjective, asymmetrical, and spatial — wins out in Ketel's painting, it would unquestionably be the former, in spite of the mixture of both types, for the essential ingredient that unifies the composition is still symmetry. And if this symmetry does not seem to dominate at first glance, that is only because the person whose head occupies the exact center of the painting (between the captain and the standard-bearer) is pushed into the background and has no other special features about him.

Objectively, the principal character is the captain. Even he, however, is not the artistic focus of the painting; instead, it is the standard-bearer, who, turned frontally toward the viewer, is positioned exactly midway between the captain and the lieutenant, who are both turned to the side in contrapposto stances. And since, on top of all this, the artist has deliberately placed all three officers in the foreground, it is impossible for the viewer to overlook the centralizing function of the standard-bearer.

Therefore, the mathematical center of the composition (the guardsman in the middle with the little dog jumping up on his leg) coincides neither with the focus of the pictorial conception (which is based on subordination to the captain) nor with the focal point of the painting (which is based on subordination to the standard-bearer). This can be corroborated by another look at the setting, because the perpendicular line of the checkerboard tile pattern (on which the center of perspective must lie) is mathematically certain to pass through the right side of the standard-bearer (as seen by the viewer). The perspective of the palace facade also corresponds to this.

The remaining figures around the main, centralized group are also arranged symmetrically, and only in the corners do we find four on one side and two on the other. We have already discussed how the composition of these four figures creates the impression of a plane, and it is even easier to do the same with the group on the other side in the right-hand corner, because even fewer figures (two) are involved. The artist was obviously relying on the slight shift of center to the right to tone down the objective impression of symmetry without obscuring it too much. The way a few figures are crowded into the right-hand side (such that the figure in the corner is actually cut in half by the frame), while a greater number of figures on the other side is allowed room for expansion, serves the same purpose.

Ketel's painting provides us, moreover, with an accurate way of mathematically measuring just how much depth the artist allotted for his figures, because they are standing with their feet on the checkerboard pattern of the tiles. The diagonally placed foot of the standard-bearer takes up the full width of one tile, which provides us with a basis of calculation. We discover that all the figures are crowded together into a plane that is only five tiles deep. If we think about what that means—namely, that the four figures on the left side who are arranged on a diagonal have to find somewhere to stand in a space that is not even five feet deep—it becomes obvious that the figures would have to be crowded very closely next to each other with very little room left over. In other words, the space in which the figures are arranged is so shallow in proportion to their number and to the width of the composition as to make it obvious that the artist intended the group to conform to the plane as much as possible.

In spite of the fact that the composition still relies so heavily on symmetry and on projection into a plane, there is no denying that, in comparison to earlier group portraits, the figures are far more spatially detached from each other. In the lower half of the painting, the movement of the legs of the figures

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standing on the checkered pavement with the dog running between them creates an impression of projection and recession. When this bottom part is covered up, the half-length figures above look even farther from each other than they do in Jacobsz.'s last paintings. This is especially true of the three officers, who form the front row of an elliptical arrangement of figures: the four other figures who participate in this arrangement are obviously meant to be standing behind the officers. This is clear not only from the way they overlap each other but also from the colors used: the dark clothing of the officers effectively pushes back the lighter clothing of the men in the second row. Contour modeling appears in some areas along the lower extremities, so that the only way we know that Ketel was not yet involved in solving problems of depicting the free space between the figures is the total absence of chiaroscuro. Finally, let us not overlook the fact that at least two of the figures are standing with their backs toward the viewer, thus defining and rounding out the group's circle of space in the spectator's direction, something that always creates the impression of a spatial center. And, in fact, the composition contains the beginnings of three potential spatial centers that go back into space: the one on the left (involving six figures), the one in the middle (established by the three officers), and the one to the right (created by the three figures on the end).

Therefore, the artist's progress in the direction of greater subjectivity was primarily concerned with solid bodies, and that is why it is important for us to examine the figures individually, apart from the composition as a whole. What we find are two completely new things: the first is the figures' physical movements, which are exaggerated often to the point of being mannered, and, secondly, the number of diagonals, which, to a certain extent, are a natural result of the movement itself.

The restless pose of the lieutenant is unprecedented, not only in earlier group portraiture but also in early Netherlandish painting in general: he partly turns his back to the viewer but averts his head so as to glance back out of the painting; his feet point in different directions. His right arm is perpendicular to the floor, while his left hand is propped up on his left hip with the elbow perpendicular to the viewer. This is the brand of Mannerism that began in Italy in the work of Michelangelo and spread to Holland particularly in the work of Maerten van Heemskerck and Cornelis Cornelisz. It specialized in figures who throw themselves into extreme positions of various kinds as though torn by inner conflict. Of course, it was no mere artistic whim that induced artists in Holland to adopt Mannerist poses for their figures; rather, the artistic evolution in the North compelled them to do so. The course of that evolution becomes clear when we think back to Jacobsz.'s triple-contorted figures with their torsos turned to the right, their heads to the left, and their glances straight outward. When we judge Ketel's figures from the point of view of subjective vision and everyday visual experience, they look odd, childish, and awkwardly distorted. And indeed they still contain remnants of the kind of thinking that dominated the Christian Middle Ages,

which Italian artists had rejected entirely by the fifteenth century, but which in the North continued until the middle of the sixteenth century. This is the dualistic conception of mind and body, as distinct from the monistic integration of both that first developed in ancient Greece, which was discredited in the late Roman period, and, finally, was reinstated to a position of lasting honor in the Renaissance.[27]

As explained earlier (p. 76), this dualistic attitude toward mind and body found in the figurative art of the Middle Ages can manifest itself clearly in one and the same figure: for example, if a figure in a particular situation is required to make a specific gesture—say, stretch out an arm—then the gesture affects this and only this part of the body; the other parts either show no reaction at all to what the arm is doing, or they move in a way that is totally inappropriate to the situation. We know, of course, from our daily, routine visual experience that the other parts of the body would naturally be affected to some extent by the arm gesture. Medieval artists saw this as a distracting error, however, and therefore intentionally left it out of their art—which, as a result, looks clumsy and awkward to the subjective, modern eye, because there is no lifelike unity. The problem that "modern" artists in the North had posed themselves since the fifteenth century, however, was more concerned with the psychological relationship between the figures in the painting and the outside world than with the interconnectedness between the figure's thoughts and physical movements. And even though Dürer and his pupils got rid of some of the most jarring disjointedness between figures' positions and movements, they still did not bring about an essential transformation of the old dualistic approach.

It was the "pagan"-minded Florentines who managed to apply a purely monistic approach to the human figure by the beginning of the sixteenth century. By Michelangelo's day, however, a new type of dualism was already beginning to form. It no longer involved a dichotomy between mind and body, but between two psychic functions—will and feeling—that could affect a body in various ways.

Northern artists had no sympathy for the monistic approach of the Italian Renaissance in which the will and the physical appearance of the figures were integrated; however, they must have been drawn to the idea of creating figures whose physical gestures were related to their emotions and, by extension, to their expression of attentiveness. They saw something in this regard that was missing in their own work and that they needed to adopt. In terms of artistic practice, their increase in subjectivity called for the same thing. What we generally refer to as "Northern Renaissance" was already essentially Baroque, because what Northern artists had adopted from their Southern counterparts, even from Raphael's paintings, was essentially a host of Baroque elements. Therefore, the transition to "Mannerism" was an easy one for Netherlandish artists, especially in their history painting.

The first generation of Mannerists in Holland, led by Jan van Scorel, generally stuck to emotionless attentiveness on the psychological level and

unconnected vertical axes on the physical level. The second generation then went on to depict the figures' emotional states and to connect them along diagonals. Cornelis Ketel is the one who introduced both of these things into group portraiture, and he deserves credit for doing so. Even though the main objective of the portrait painting of Holland was to bring out the emotional character of the sitter, this was possible only when the emotion involved could be expressed in visible, physical terms. Therefore, for portrait painting in Holland to refine itself to its most subtle psychological level, it was necessary for an artist like Ketel to come along to exploit the full range of physical positions of the human figure, so that later artists could learn to read them and coordinate them with their figures' inner, emotional states.

What Ketel was at such pains to show through the mannered movements of his guardsmen was that the parts of the body are ruled by psychological impulses: dependent on them and inseparable from them. Like all proselytizers of the new, Ketel was overly enthusiastic, and that is why his work sometimes has the opposite effect on us today from what he might have intended, because we now know a lot more about monism and subjectivity. Ketel's figures now look stiff and clumsy, especially in comparison to Italian Mannerist figures, who, though similarly exaggerated, are still accurately drawn and visually convincing. Obviously, the Hollanders had not yet completely shaken off the old duality; and, even though later Rubens, a Fleming, did manage to overcome it, Rembrandt was not as successful. In spite of everything, there is still something leaden about the way Rembrandt's figures move, making them seem headstrong and resolute. The more extreme the movement of the figures, the less successful it looks according to modern, antique, Baroque, and Renaissance standards. And that is why Holland's great artists of the seventeenth century generally avoided the depiction of violent movement whenever possible — quite aside from the fact that, as painters of "attentiveness," they were always automatically on their guard against all forms of distracting physical activity.

The second new thing about the physical appearance of the figures in Ketel's group portrait is the sudden appearance of so many diagonals. The figures in the earlier portraits were stiffly lined up next to each other, and it was not until the 1560s that we found even so much as a shouldered musket or a head turned at an angle. Now, however, there is a wealth of diagonals, created first of all by the various weapons; secondly, by the recherché poses of the figures; and thirdly, by the many tilted heads. The diagonal outlines of the figures help create an impression of mannered, artificial movement (to a particularly exaggerated extent in the last figure on the right, whose front contour forms two sides of a triangle). What purpose did the artist have in mind with all of these diagonals? What kind of artistic sense do they make?

The compositions of the earlier civic guard group portraits generally consist of horizontal, occasionally staggered rows of vertical figures. The verticality of the figures' position emphasizes the objective isolation of each individual, and therefore greatly enhances the desired portrait quality by underscoring

the autonomy of the sitter. In the case of centralized compositions, the posture of the figure in the middle is generally as rigidly upright as that of any of the others, so that only the placement itself, or at most relative size or distinctive attributes, gives any indication of the figure's role as a centralizing, unifying device. Diagonal lines, in contrast to vertical lines, are subjective: they function mainly as connectors that tie the verticals together, and this act of relating disconnected objects is always subjective. Since, however, like all lines, diagonals are two-dimensional and do not operate spatially, they still have a role to play in images that are objectively conceived.

In the history of art, diagonal lines are never found in periods when artistic volition was primarily focused on isolating objects, as was the case in the ancient Near East, the late Roman era, and the Middle Ages. On the other hand, they appear in abundance in periods interested in connecting objects within a plane. As a result, diagonals predominate in the Greek art of antiquity to the degree that they actually define its character, at least as far as composition is concerned. Diagonals also play an important role in all recent art, based as it is on the interrelationship of figures, because even figurative compositions preoccupied with depicting solid bodies need diagonal lines, because the representation of self-contained bodies in isolation must always to some degree remain tied to a plane.

Traditionally, the artists of Holland sought to represent the connection as such, that is, that which existed between the figures (attentiveness, sympathy), by means of the appearance of the figures (space, light, combinations of colors). In turning now to study solid objects—if only to make the relationship among the figures more convincing—they, like the Mannerists who used exaggerated poses, quickly decided to adopt the diagonal line of Italian Baroque art and to exploit it for its connecting capabilities. The use of diagonals in place of the verticals that isolated the figures in earlier portraits is a sign of the tendency toward greater subjectivity. There was nothing particularly revolutionary about this, however: diagonal lines are perfectly compatible with symmetrical, planar compositions and have nothing inherent in them that would stop artists from continuing to compose their group portraits in the traditionally objective way.

The diagonals in Ketel's painting created by the various weapons are the ones that do the best job of relating the figures in the composition along the picture plane. Now, it is highly unlikely that the guardsmen of those days actually turned out with such a colorful array of arms, and just as improbable that the regulation grips resembled what Ketel portrayed. The long shafts of the lances, the barrels of the muskets, the pointed swords, and the mighty flambergs all make splendid artistic devices, however. The captain's halberd and the lieutenant's sword form two sides of a triangle, its apex somewhere inside the standard-bearer who also, to a certain extent, functions as the focal point of visual interest for the whole composition. Most of Ketel's figures have traded the traditional, vertical body axis for oblique postures that naturally give rise to diagonal contours. Moreover, the artistic focal point of

the composition — namely, the standard-bearer — is once again inscribed in an equilateral triangle: the right arm holding the flag and the left arm supported on his hip appear to form the same angle in relation to the top of the head.

Finally, the way a number of the figures tilt their heads at various angles also creates diagonals. Of course, the preceding symbolic period had already begun to exploit that device as a means of increasing the psychological aspect in the pictorial conception. For example, in Barendsz.'s painting of 1566, the head of the presiding officer is held at such an angle that it forms a contrapposto with the slanting heads of the men next to and behind him, which establishes an invisible vertical line as the center of the composition. Of course, it is not surprising to find an artistic strategy like this in the hands of an artist who had been in Venice and thus would surely have been familiar with Tintoretto's manner.

All in all, however, in spite of the way Ketel exploited diagonal lines to relate his figures along the picture plane in this piece, he was not as successful in doing so as were Italian artists. Similarly, he did not exaggerate his figures' movements to the extent permitted in Italy. Ketel's inhibition, of course, is just another manifestation of the ineradicable desire of the Hollanders to keep figures physically isolated and separate from each other and to allow them to interact only with their surrounding space. In keeping with this, Ketel's diagonal lines always remain closely restricted to the individual figures and do not continue beyond them. To be sure, there are instances where two figures combine to form the sloping sides of a triangle, for example, the axes formed by the postures and weapons of the captain and the lieutenant. These diagonals do not, however, extend to connect a whole series of figures together. In the Netherlands, it was not until Rubens that anyone took real advantage of the unifying capability of the diagonal, and then it was restricted to Flanders. For the artists of Holland, however, in spite of a few isolated attempts in this direction,[28] diagonals never became an issue of general concern, just as the whole problem of unifying the movements of the human body was never a major interest.

We have already taken a look at how Ketel pushed the figures in the second row back into space by manipulating light and dark. These contrasts, however, involved only the figures and not the space around them, which does not have even the slightest hint of chiaroscuro. Instead, the artist relied on the rudimentary devices of overlapping and foreshortening to clarify spatial relationships. Ketel was fond of exaggerating both of them, and, as it turns out, they are an accurate gauge of the degree of subjectivity he had reached at this point. Good examples of this are the foreshortening of the lieutenant and the way the frame overlaps the figures on both sides so that one man on the right-hand side is sliced off almost exactly down the middle. As noted elsewhere,[29] one figure on the left side consists solely of a raised arm holding a lance, with no body attached to it at all; the only figure who could possibly be construed as the owner of the raised arm has both hands prominently displayed. Now,

given that Ketel obviously knew what he was doing, he must have had a reason for including the disembodied arm, and that was for us to have to imagine the rest of the figure cut off by the frame. This is the audacious use of masking found later, though in much milder form, in Guercino's *Saint Petronilla* in the Capitoline Museum and in Rembrandt's *Presentation in the Temple* (Bartsch 51). Only Michetti managed to trump Ketel: in his *Figlia di Jorio* (Daughter of Jorio), he went so far as to have the frame cut off the head of a standing, full-length figure!

Another unusual thing about Ketel's group portrait is that all the guardsmen are bareheaded, even though they are standing out-of-doors. This was undoubtedly not only contrary to the custom of the civic guard but also to the customs of Holland in general. There must have been some sort of artistic motivation for leaving out the usual headgear. Now, the outline of a human head without a hat is decidedly more distinct and more clearly defined than one with a hat, and this is probably why Ketel (and his public) preferred this solution. Furthermore, the artist's demonstrated penchant for linear composition adequately confirms this assumption.

Other noteworthy details include the wide ruffs that gradually start to evolve around 1554. These tend to keep the figures' heads visually separated from their torsos, while their indentations provide a gradual transition to the surrounding space.

When we concluded that Ketel's achievement was to have introduced Baroque Mannerism into the group portraiture of Holland,[30] that did not imply he ever forgot he was first and foremost a portrait painter. Ketel may have gotten caught up in the physical aspects of his figures' poses and movements, but he never lost sight of the fact that his main objective was to capture the psychological character of his sitters as expressed in their physiognomy. And he was not the first to begin using Mannerist movements and lines for their own sake; other, anonymous painters had begun incorporating them into their group portraits before he did.

A painting by one such unknown artist formerly hung in the Handboogs-doelen, but is now preserved only in a sketch. Six dated it 1586, and the clothing of the figures seems to confirm that.[31] A number of men are shown arranged around a table; they are only half-length figures, but this made it easier for the artist to twist and turn them in so many directions that everything dissolves into contrapposto. The diagonals not only form a connection between several figures at once — something that Ketel (see above, p. 184) was still at pains to avoid two years later — but subtly interconnect all of them. The obvious physical intertwining that exists among the figures directly corresponds to their obvious psychological interrelatedness. Traditionally, the attentiveness expressed by sitters gave them a reserved look that seldom went beyond quiet curiosity and passive participation, and this was a look that Ketel tried to maintain at all costs. By contrast, the figures preserved in Six's sketch are engaged in a jumble of emotions, assertions, and embraces. The way the figures behave with each other is generally unsettling, but especially

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so in the instance where one of the men seems to be too insistently forcing his friendship on his comrade, who pointedly turns his head away. A few figures were already beginning to interact in this one-sided way in Barendsz.'s painting of 1566, but here it goes beyond tolerable limits. It serves to remind the viewer, plainly enough, that it is still not appropriate for group portraiture to set up the kind of genuine, self-contained exchanges between figures that are associated with genre scenes and require no participation from an outside observer to complete.

Of course, very few artists in Holland were as single-minded in their preoccupation with physical movements as this anonymous painter. At the same time, Ketel's solution was not yet convincingly unified enough to be satisfying. The main problem was to find a way of arranging the various parts of the human body so that they would *all* be as unified and interrelated as possible: if one anatomical part were engaged in a specific activity, then all the rest should be expected to respond in accordance with subjective visual experience. Mind and body would again become united after their fundamental separation in the Middle Ages. The basic thinking was that, when the mind motivated one part of the body to carry out a particular movement, then the rest of the body should more or less follow suit.

Human physical movement has two possible sources of motivation: the first is will, an act that isolates one from the outer world; the second is emotion, an inner state that keeps one connected with it. Artists in Holland could never entirely ignore the latter; nevertheless, it was only the sitters' physical movements that could visually communicate their feelings. Therefore, the artists in this period now began paying special attention to ways of depicting physical movement, even though these mainly involved the kind reflective of emotion and attentiveness.

The main problems confronting group portraitists between 1580 and 1610 were how to depict physical movement and, closely connected to it, how to relate figures in a plane. Some artists followed the Italian model, concentrating on getting control over devices governing movement and line. Others, however, who were also interested in exploring the human body's potential for movement, did so not for its own sake but for its capacity to express interior states of feeling in physical terms. In Amsterdam, Pieter Isaacsz. was the main representative of the first group, and Aert Pietersz. of the second.

Surviving work by Isaacsz. includes a sketch of a group portrait, once located in the guildhall of the Handboogsdoelen (illustrated in *Oud Holland* 15 [see note 31], plate III). In addition, Six and van Riemsdyck ascribe to him two group portraits in the Rijksmuseum, nos. 755 [RM no. SK-C-410] and 757 [RM no. SK-C-455]. In any case, all three of these works follow the direction set by Ketel.

The Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1596 by Pieter Isaacsz.
Painting no. 755 [AHM no. A 7338] (fig. 29) is dated 1596. Twenty-two guardsmen are lined up, crowded very close to each other, along the width of

the painting. Although the line formed by the tops of their heads moves freely, it still forms essentially a single straight line. This is another typical instance of a painting whose physical arrangement is more instantly obvious to the viewer than is the intellectual conception behind it. For the first time, the artist took advantage of an artistic strategy that had long been exploited in antique and Italian Renaissance art but opposed in the North, where artists tended categorically to reject any unifying device that linked objects within a plane. In aesthetics since Winckelmann, we refer to this as the concern for formal, physical beauty. This solution consists of breaking up a long line of figures into smaller, roughly equal groups that, though distinct and separate from each other, are still clearly related to the larger group as a whole.

Five figures stand out from the rest of the group and maintain a place in the foreground slightly in front of the others. First comes the standard-bearer, who is located in the exact center of the painting. Then there are the two men who punctuate the midpoint of each of the halves with their contrapposto stances. Finally, one man on each side completes the composition by leaning inward, creating diagonal lines that flow downward and out of the painting. These five foreground figures establish a firm, regular structure for the rest of the figures, who are arranged symmetrically, though much more loosely, behind them. A few of the men still find themselves in the kind of ascending rows that we observed on the left-hand side of Ketel's painting: they are meant to be thought of as receding in space, but their heads are shown in one plane, rising in steps one above the other. If one tried to imagine the five foreground figures without anyone else behind them, they would look very posed. In particular, the positions of the two men leaning into the painting on either side—one of whom is holding up a shield, while the other has draped his left arm over a pedestal—are so recherché and forced that even the most naive observer could never be deceived into thinking that the grouping could reflect a subjective viewing experience.

The composition as a whole is definitely a regression to earlier objectivity. And yet, this actually turned out to be a prerequisite for further progress because until the artists of Holland gained precise control over physical movement and line they could not pursue their real goal, which was to give expression to pure psychology and pure free space. They first needed to have a thorough knowledge of their figures' physical movement before they could refine psychological expression, and to learn all they could about line before they could define the dimensions of the space involved and then unify it. Only after they passed through this stage did they find themselves in a position to proceed successfully beyond it. Isaacsz. also used the lines created by the weapons and the flag to tie the figures together in a plane, the same way Ketel had done in 1588, but he was much better at it than his predecessor, and he did it much more smoothly.

The pictorial conception is basically the same as Ketel's—a presentation— but more evolved. In both cases, the captain is not placed in the middle of the composition. Ketel, however, at least gave the officer a prominent place in the
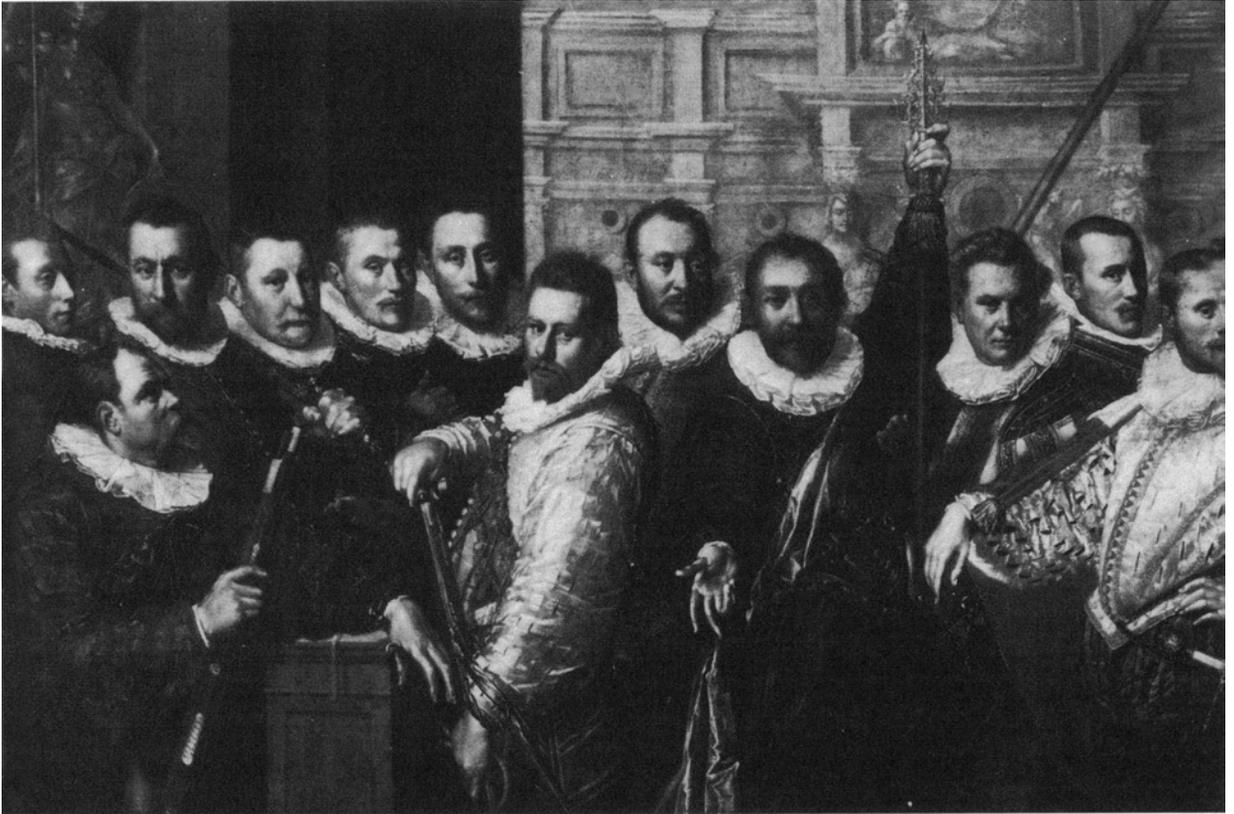
Fig. 29. Probably by Pieter Isaacsz.
Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1596
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

foreground: here, on the other hand, the captain is not located in the fore-
ground at all, and as a result he withdraws more completely into the uniform
mass of the rest of the company. In fact, the only reason we identify him as the
captain is because he is the only one communicating with the viewer, which he
does energetically, and because of his broad sash. Moreover, whereas Ketel's
captain is shown in the act of introducing the other officers, Isaacsz.'s captain
turns directly to greet the viewer in the name of the whole company. This
makes the pictorial conception more focused and unified; at the same time,
Isaacsz. seems to have made even less of an attempt than Ketel to subordi-
nate the company to the figure of main importance. The captain is in charge
of presenting the company, but he does so as primus inter pares: Holland's
esprit de corps, rooted firmly in a spirit of coordination, automatically made
adjustments in the pictorial conception to compensate for the greater degree
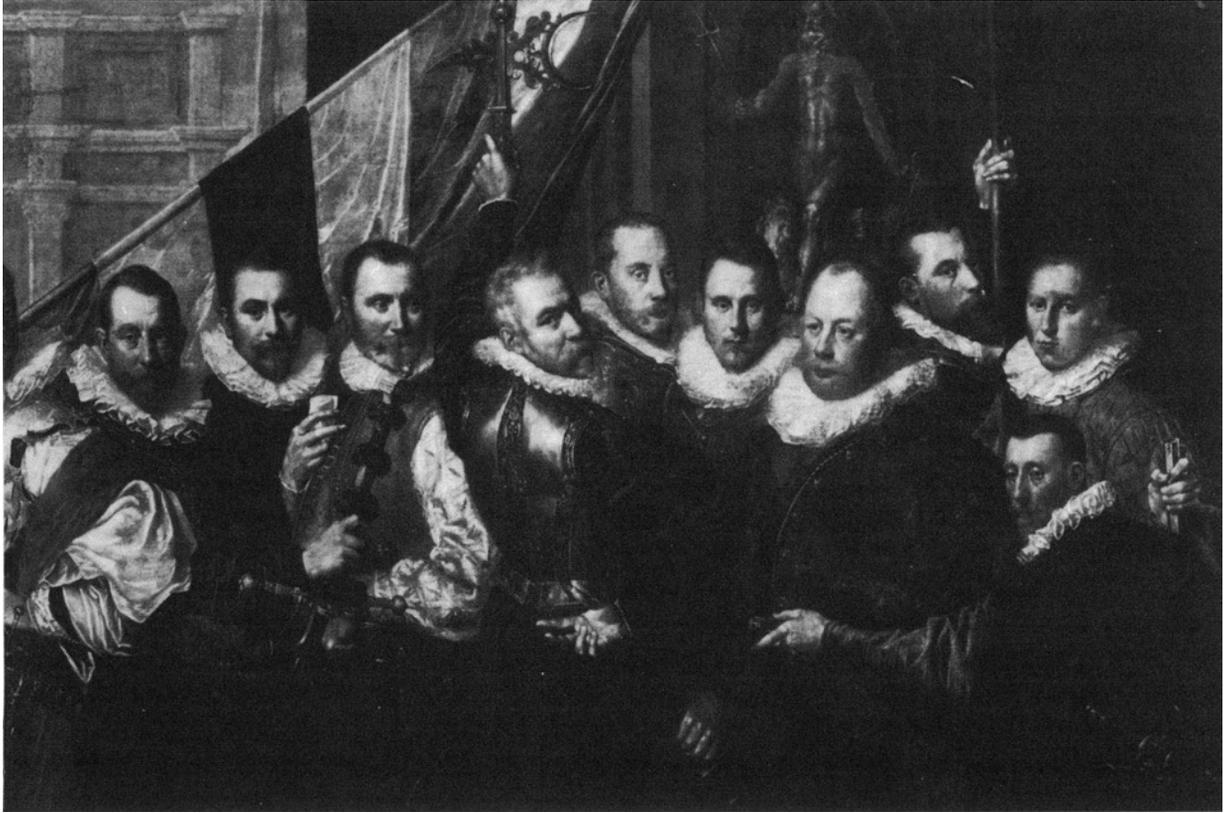
of subordination. And that is why the figure who is the focal point of the idea behind the painting takes up a relatively insignificant position in its physical arrangement.

Isaacsz.'s treatment of the background also starts off like Ketel's in that the viewer strains to peer between what look like two stage wings advancing on either side before discovering a shimmering, Baroque palace facade with strongly protruding pilasters (analogous to the five prominent figures in the foreground). Now, however, there are more clues that help define the free space between the figures and the facade: the palace is set back more convincingly in space first because of its proportions and secondly because of the dark wings to either side. As a result, we can clearly imagine an open, free space between the flats and the facade of the palace which, moreover, is completely coordinated with the vertical open space above the figures' heads.

One need only think back to the way Scorel closely cropped the heads of his pilgrims to the Holy Sepulcher to see what progress the masters of Holland had made in the painting of free space that would characterize the seventeenth century. Finally, Isaacsz.'s decision to leave his figures bareheaded is another indication that his work belongs to the same stage of the evolution as Ketel's.

The second group portrait that the Dutch scholars cited above attribute to Isaacsz. is no. 757 [RM no. SK-C-455] in the Rijksmuseum, dated 1599. It consists of a civic guard banquet with twenty-three full-length figures. We find in this work less of an insistence on subordinating the figures and involving the viewer in completing the genre scene, probably because the banquet idea in and of itself still retained symbolic associations that would automatically unify the composition. On the other hand, one-sided relationships between figures play a large role. If we are correct in assuming that Isaacsz. is the artist of this painting, then it looks as though he invested a bit more time in developing the psychological expression of the figures here than in his earlier work, where he seemed more concerned about the linear structure of the composition. The composition of the background is similar to that of the earlier one.

The third painting — in this case, a documented work by Isaacsz. — is also a civic guard banquet. Known only as a sketch (*Oud Holland* [see note 31], pl. III), it dates to between 1604 and 1607. Seventeen men are seated around a table, some of whom are visible down to knee level. The table juts out at an angle that clearly reflects the Baroque interest in projecting objects in space. There is nothing on the table, and only a few of the men hold goblets. Those figures not seated directly around the spatial center are only loosely connected to each other, and they do not line up in rigid rows. Few of the men interact, even one-sidedly; on the other hand, many of the heads are set at an angle that lends them a certain amount of emotional depth. This shows that Isaacsz., having solved the obvious compositional problems, turned increasingly to the depiction of emotion, a problem more within the realm of the artistic volition of Holland. The background consists of the now familiar wings, in this instance, tied together by a pleasant and airy round arch, immediately behind which are houses and trees. The head of one of the men, located in the exact middle of the arch, destroys the initial impression of figures casually arranged around a spatial center and creates a symmetrical, objectivistic effect. An elegantly dressed standard-bearer in the right-hand corner reminds us that Frans Hals is not far off.

Aert Pietersz.

Though even an Italian observer might have felt somewhat moved to compliment the civic guard group portrait of 1596, he would surely have turned his back in indignation on the civic guard group portrait that Aert Pietersz. completed soon afterward, in 1599 (signed "A. P."). After what we have seen of the work of Cornelis Ketel and a few other artists of the period, it comes as

a surprise to discover a work so completely lacking in all the available Italian devices that so successfully enhance the clarity and unity of a painting. Nevertheless, this painting is a product of the very same period and reflects the very same artistic approach, in spite of its different appearance.

Aert Pietersz. was the son of "Tall Pete" (Pieter Aertsen), the founder of the type of Hollandish genre scene that relied more on mood than on humor for its effect. Aertsen's type of genre did not simply make fun of other people's foibles and cater to the viewer's sense of his or her own superiority, as the Flemish genre usually did. In Aertsen's work, one is always able to see a bit of oneself in the person who is the butt of the joke, which then naturally encourages a more tolerant and understanding attitude. Assuming the apple does not fall far from the tree, we can expect to see some of the father's basic tendencies coming out in the son's portraits. Now, the younger man, Pietersz., was active at a time when artists were mainly preoccupied with having their figures move in a convincing manner, and, while certainly sharing this preoccupation, he used it to reveal underlying psychological motivation.

The Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1599 by Aert Pietersz.

Compared to the group portraits we have seen by Dirck Barendsz., Cornelis Ketel, and Pieter Isaacsz., Aert Pietersz.'s civic guard group portrait of 1599 (no. 1108 [AHM no. A 7386] in the Rijksmuseum, fig. 30) looks as though it should date from at least a half-century earlier. A whole list of devices are throwbacks to Jacobsz.'s earliest attempts to solve the problem of the group portrait: two even rows of figures, one above the other, separated by a partition; the tops of the heads of the figures in the upper row almost touch the frame; all of the men look straight out at the viewer, either pointing to their neighbors or holding objects in their hands (including the familiar wineglass of the banquet motif); the secretary with pen and account book reappears; surprisingly, there is even one instance of the old motif of touching hands (first man from the right in the upper row), long since abandoned by other artists; finally, a total refusal to allow even one-sided relationships to develop among the men. It looks as though we have stumbled upon an artist who was so intent on eliminating all the foreign innovations that had crept into group portraiture in Holland, such as subordination and figure grouping, that he went all the way back to the rudimentary row system and to the most rigid of symbolism. And there is little doubt that this was his intention. Whether Aert Pietersz. liked it or not, however, the times had changed considerably in seventy years; even he could not escape the influence of the Romanist brand of Mannerism, and that is because it was absolutely essential to the evolution specific to Holland. Pictorial conception and composition were affected equally.

All of the men look directly out at the viewer, just as they had in Jacobsz.'s day; in other words, each sitter individually addresses his attention toward the spectator. Formerly, however, the heads of the men assumed a vertical position that was as rigid and objective as possible, one that gave no hint whatsoever of inner emotion. That implies that a figure's attentiveness was

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assumed to be absolute and eternal, with nothing momentary about it; at the same time, the viewer was assumed to be absolute, ideal, and by no means an individualized entity. Returning now to Pietersz.'s work, it is obvious that the heads in his group portrait are those of individuals who enjoy a particularized inner life that is in a state of constant flux. There is hardly a single instance of the earlier rigid, objectively vertical body axis: instead, most of the heads are turned at various angles that reflect a lively inner world of feeling; these heads are mentally poised, in no uncertain terms, to interact with the viewer. The slight raising or lowering of a head, arching of eyebrows, or knitting of brows are signs that each figure has momentarily focused his attention on a particular point in the space occupied by the viewer.

We find the same contrast between the earlier and later works when we examine the various actions. The weapons carried by the men cannot be intended as symbols, because almost everybody has one: space permitting, a sword hilt, at least, is visible for each man. The weapons, therefore, no longer carry the weight of generalized symbols, but become attributes of specific persons. Furthermore — to put the pointing motif in this portrait in the proper perspective — it is important to note that it is not always the kind where one man is introducing his neighbor: the right hands of two or three of the men in the front row closest to the viewer are being held up directly toward the viewer. Note, for example, the raised finger of the second man on the right-hand side. These gestures can no longer be interpreted as generalized, symbolic interactions between the sitters and an ideal viewer, but as a momentary exchange with an individualized viewer. And the same goes for the rest of the figures' actions. One of several clear cases of this is the man with the pen who is about to write something in his account book: he is caught in an instant of carrying out his task, and yet, at the same time, he glances up with such intensity that it looks as though he wants to make a sketch of the viewer, or else note down what pearls of wisdom may fall from the viewer's lips.

In both periods, we are confronted with Baroque dualism, with its strict separation of object and subject; however, the viewing subject is now individualized (although it will still take some time before we can assume one *single* individual). Here again, the Italian artists were further ahead than their Northern counterparts: Saint Gemignano in Correggio's *Madonna with Saint Sebastian* is perhaps not the earliest example from the first half of the sixteenth century, but surely the most famous. In the realm of group portraiture, we find the first hints of this conception in the earliest civic guard group portrait by Jacobsz. of 1529; subsequently in Barendsz.'s more mature work of 1566; and finally in the painting of 1596, attributed to Pieter Isaacsz., where the gesture of the captain perfectly implies the presence of an individualized observer.

These observations allow us to conclude that the pictorial conception of Pietersz.'s work no longer relies on symbolism, but on genre. As in the works of 1588 and 1596, it is the motif of the presentation that unites Pietersz.'s group portrait. But in this case the presentation is not in the hands of a single

individual who then subordinates all the others; instead, each of the men feels entitled, on his own initiative, to present to the viewer either his comrades or objects with which he has dealings within the guild. As a result, Pietersz. was able to avoid — and this was surely a conscious effort on his part — the more advanced form of subordination practiced by Ketel or Isaacsz.

He could not avoid it entirely, however, for subordination was one of those Mannerist devices that was there to stay once it found its way into the painting of Holland. In the lower front row, we see three guardsmen seated next to each other; the flag identifies one of them as the standard-bearer, while the sashes mark the other two as the captain and the lieutenant. None of them is doing anything in particular to attract attention. Although one man is making a gesture toward the viewer with his hand, it is not nearly as eye-catching as the one made by his neighbor to the right who, however, has none of the trappings of an officer. Nevertheless, the mere suggestion of the existence of its officers gives rise to a certain cohesion within the squad; moreover, the three officers stand out somewhat more because they are not so obscured by overlapping and are therefore more visually accessible than most of the others.

An examination of the composition leads to identical conclusions. Even though the old double-row, horizontal scheme is maintained, the individual units within the rows are not forced into a strictly vertical lineup, as they were in earlier paintings. Both the upper torsos and the heads are arranged in ways that tend — in moderation — toward the diagonal. Moreover, the positioning of the flag, the lances, and the gunstocks make it clear that even Pietersz. was acutely aware of the degree to which these linear elements contribute effectively to the coherence of the group portrait. Furthermore, the rows are actually allowed to break down into groups, however subtle and inconspicuous they may be: it is easy to see that in the center of the composition there is a group of five men in the upper row and a group of four in the lower that includes the three officers. To either side in both rows are groups of three on the left and of two on the right. This is clear evidence that even the device of figure grouping, which was the second most important Mannerist innovation introduced into the Netherlands, had become such an integral part of the evolution in Holland at this point that even an artist as reactionary as Pietersz. could no longer ignore it.

Another noteworthy aspect of Pietersz.'s approach is his treatment of the space surrounding the figures. In the foreground, he kept everything pretty much lined up in one plane; in the background, however, like Ketel and Isaacsz., he went after a more dynamic arrangement. Furthermore, also following his two fellow artists, he placed a pier in the corner of each side of the picture in the plane just behind the figures and allowed a free space to recede between them. But where Ketel and Isaacsz. included a view of a palace facade, Pietersz. allows the side wall of the piers to recede back along a diagonal, so that the horizontal wall in the background that might have bounded the area is lost in darkness (at least in the painting's present condition); the

only thing that the viewer can really make out is a fireplace on the right side wall, which recedes in space along an orthogonal according to the rules of linear perspective.

There are two elements therefore that distinguish Pietersz.'s treatment from Ketel's and Isaacsz.'s: the recession of space along an orthogonal and the darkening of the background, both of them signs of an increase in subjectivity. The first one, the perspectival recession, affects the solid figures, while the second, the darkened area, affects the illusion of the space between them. Now, it may very well be that the background looks darker today than it did originally because it has been painted over a number of times and been subject to other discoloration. All things considered, however, it is still evident that Pietersz. intentionally conceived of the light as growing dimmer as it recedes into the background, and this is enough to put him in line with other artists from Holland who were beginning to exploit chiaroscuro as the means of working toward the eventual solution for the problem of space.

As in Ketel's and Isaacsz.'s group portraits, the men are all still bareheaded. Pietersz., however, considerably limited the variety of dress in color and style in comparison to the others, particularly Ketel who was keen on making a stunning effect. In general, Pietersz. limited his attention to the figures' hands and heads. His great achievement was to have created figures that had convincing physical movements and then gone on to lend them the appropriate psychological depth; he knew how to make portraits that are full of feeling and very much alive. Consequently, he occupies a place well within the strictly defined mainstream in Holland as represented by Jacobsz., and because he successfully integrated Romanist devices, he prepared the way for further positive progress.

The Emergence of Anatomy Lessons and Regent Group Portraits

At the turn from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century, two new types of group portraits began to emerge: anatomy lessons and regent group portraits, the second of which in particular would soon outweigh civic guard commissions in importance. Each theme goes together naturally with a subordinating pictorial conception. We can prove that Pietersz. participated directly in the establishment of the genre of the anatomy lesson; however, his status in regard to the earliest regent group portrait is not as certain. Some attribute it to him, but even if this turns out not to be the case, its pictorial conception is so close to what we associate with Pietersz.'s work that it is safe to assume that he also had a decisive, if indirect, influence on the establishment of this second new type of group portrait.

Anatomy lessons are group portraits of surgeons' guilds. Surgeons were naturally united by their interest in learning all they could about the physical aspects of the human body, and they did so by dissecting corpses. Dissection, or occasionally the examination of a skeleton, provided the basic motif of the anatomy-lesson type of group portrait from the beginning of its evolution. It is symptomatic of the stage that group portraiture had reached by 1600 that,

Fig. 30. Aert Pietersz.
Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1599
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Fig. 31. Aert Pietersz.
The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Sebastian Egbertsz., dated 1603
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

from the start, there was always only one person in charge, namely, the professor. Nevertheless, artists still had enough latitude in handling the subordinating relationship between the professor and his audience, as well as between that audience and the viewer, to allow for further systematic evolution which — like all other aspects of the art of the period — moved in an increasingly subjective direction.

"The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Sebastian Egbertsz." by Aert Pietersz.

The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Sebastian Egbertsz. (fig. 31), no. 1109 [AHM no. A 7387] in the Rijksmuseum, carries the date 1603 on one of the chairbacks in the middle of the painting. We know, however, that Pietersz. had begun this large work with its twenty-nine figures several years earlier but had been interrupted by an outbreak of plague in Amsterdam. If we ignore for a moment the corpse lying on a dissecting table that runs parallel to the picture surface — that is, in a plane — and the spatial center surrounding it, we find the exact same characteristics that are familiar to us from the artist's civic guard group portrait of 1599. Although the archaic gesture of touching hands still occurs a number of times, several of the figures are so energetically inviting the viewer to join them in examining the corpse that there can be no doubt that this group portrait is conceived as a genre scene depicting specific individuals in a transitory moment. The heads of the figures in the anatomy lesson are held at more extreme angles than the ones in the earlier civic guard group portrait; moreover, their gazes seem to express more depth of feeling and more personal interest in the viewer than those in the earlier work. Here we can observe progress in those very areas in which Pietersz. excelled.[32]

The device of having all twenty-nine men focusing their attention in the direction of the viewer, who can be thought of as suddenly having appeared in their midst, proves to be a very successful one for unifying the group. The viewer, who represents the final necessary ingredient of a genre scene,[33] then completes the group. For a moment, we entirely forget that there is something going on in this painting that is centered on one man, to whom the other twenty-eight are supposed to be subordinating themselves. And even after one begins to pursue the idea, it is still hard to pick out this main character. He turns out to be the one with the forceps, the only standing figure among the men grouped directly around the corpse, and the only one whose half-length figure is not obstructed by others. Because the composition is an arrangement of rows in a plane, however, he does not at first stand out. At a cursory glance, he simply blends in with the other figures in the back row, but, since he is shorter than the men to his immediate left and right, he is easy to overlook in both the upper and lower rows. Pietersz.'s choice of composition and pictorial conception, therefore, manages successfully to neutralize the subordinating role which, by rights, should have gone to the professor by virtue of the theme. Only careful observation reveals the number of ways in which the professor is more subtly characterized than the others: for example, he is neither looking straight out at the viewer nor directing his attention to a specific

point in an immediate or intense way. Instead, the professor seems vaguely disturbed by the intruder (or intruders) who is (or are) momentarily drawing the attention of the others from his words. He also seems intent on ignoring this intrusion and not losing the thread of his lecture. At all events, in contrast to the other men in his immediate vicinity, the professor is the only one who is not subordinating himself to the viewer.

Pietersz.'s handling of the pictorial conception of *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Sebastian Egbertsz.* is the best illustration of the artistic volition in Holland, and especially Amsterdam, at that time. Given the theme, one might have expected him to depict the surgeons in a subordinate relationship to the professor, thus establishing clearly motivated internal coherence among the figures within the painting, in conformity with antique and Italian approaches. On the contrary, however, this Amsterdam artist concentrates more on developing external coherence with the viewer of the painting. Jacobsz. had also focused on this relationship in 1529; however, since his day, it had become more and more obvious to the artists of Holland that the external coherence of the portrait that so concerned them was most intense when it occurred in combination with a relatively resolved internal coherence. First, the symbolic banquet and then the idea of a genre scene centered around a presentation had provided civic guard group portraits with this sort of interaction. For anatomy lessons, because they emerged at an advanced stage of the overall evolution, this focus quickly became the professor lecturing about a cadaver. One thing that must always be stressed, however (and it is something routinely disregarded in discussions of Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*), is that the artists of Holland never lost sight of their main goal of exploiting external coherence and that their interest in internal coherence was only a means to that end and was never pursued for its own sake.

Just as our first glance at Pietersz.'s civic guard group portrait made us think that the artist was reverting back to the earliest group portrait, Jacobsz.'s painting of 1529, the composition of this painting is reminiscent of Teunissen's painting of 1533. Like the table in Barendsz.'s painting of 1566, the cadaver sets up a completely self-contained spatial center. Behind the row of seated figures, however, is a second, more impressive row of standing figures not found in Barendsz.'s painting, so that we are led back further to Teunissen. The background consists of a neutral, wall-like surface familiar to us from Jacobsz.'s work of 1529. The tops of the heads of the men in the upper row come close to touching the frame, although not nearly as narrowly as the ones in the civic guard group portrait of 1599.

If, in spite of all these archaic devices Pietersz.'s work still amounts to an enormous advance even beyond that of Barendsz., this is primarily due to the way he is able to create figures with more convincing, subjectively satisfying movements and to animate the space in the foreground. The back row is still kept essentially horizontal and cannot even boast a central emphasis; however, its individual units are not all strictly vertical axes, but are often set at an angle. Furthermore, the cadaver functions much more successfully as a spatial

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center than does the table in Barendsz.'s painting of 1566, because the eye level used to project the space is much lower here than there. Moreover, the eye level conforms more nearly to what we would expect for a person of average height, and therefore it makes a more subjectively convincing impression.

Finally, the artist meticulously avoided arranging the figures in obviously subordinating relationships; nevertheless, even an untutored observer would have no difficulty picking out the natural breakdowns of the larger group. The foreground figures, consisting of the men around the cadaver plus the ones to either side, are obviously grouped into three smaller units: seven men in the left-hand group, four in the center, and four on the right. These subdivisions, for the untutored observer, expand to include similar subdivisions in the back row: the left-hand group adds to its ranks the line of men leading up to the professor; then the central group is associated with him and with the ones standing next to him as far as and including the fourth man from the right; finally, the rest of them form the right-hand group. Pietersz. had reached the same standpoint with respect to figure grouping that modern art reached just before its newest, most recent phase: all the while he was unobtrusively grouping his figures in the objective manner, he was also trying, using very subtle means, to convince the viewer that the scene in the painting was the result of common subjective experience captured in a moment of time.

Finally, the shading of the background that we already observed in Pietersz.'s earlier painting is even darker here. The surface of the painting looks overpainted, so that one has to be cautious about drawing any conclusions about its color. Nevertheless, something of the dark dress of the men, the unarticulated background wall, and the deep shadows between the figures must predate any subsequent retouching. This fact, together with the many similarities between this painting and Pietersz.'s earlier work of 1599, which is still in its original condition, allows us to count Pietersz. among the forerunners of those artists who have made a contribution to Holland's distinctive form of chiaroscuro painting.

The Regent Group Portrait of 1599 by an Unknown Amsterdam Artist

An inscription on the chairback located in the left corner of painting no. 1111 [RM no. SK-A-865] in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 32) reads: "*In Martio a° 1599*" (In March 1599), making this work the earliest regent group portrait we know of today. The six men, portrayed as half-length figures, were not administrators of a charity organization, as is usually the case, but of the trade association of cloth manufacturers. As a result, they are the ancestors of the *staalmeesters* (syndics of the drapers' guild) whom Rembrandt immortalized in 1661–1662. It is rather a happy coincidence that this corporation of Amsterdam merchants supplied the sitters not only for the earliest regent group portrait that we know of, but also for the most developed one of its kind (in fact, the most perfect group portrait of any kind).

Dr. Six attributes the painting to Aert Pietersz., and there is much to be said on his behalf. We find the same sallow heads emerging from the darkness

Fig. 32. Anonymous
Regent Group Portrait of 1599
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

of the background here as we do in Pietersz.'s two signed works, the only difference being that their pale cheeks have now taken on an occasional blush. The pictorial conception, however, which is geared toward exploiting the movements of the figures' heads and hands as a way of animating them and having them impress us with great intellectual depth, is otherwise completely identical in every respect.

The six men, this time with hats on their heads, look directly out at the viewer. Two of them are holding samples of cloth in their right hands, while a third displays the stamp with the factory mark. A fourth man in the upper left is holding an object in his hand which is partially cut off by the frame, so that it will have to be left to local experts to identify it. The fifth man, counting on his fingers, is obviously the treasurer. The sixth one, finally, is extending his right hand in the direction of the viewer, thus supplying the crucial ingredient that counteracts the presence of so many apparent symbols, the one that is absolutely necessary for the pictorial conception of the painting to qualify as a genre scene of the kind associated with the period of Dutch independence. This sixth syndic is obviously engaged in a moment of interaction with an individualized subject located in the space of the viewer, and the same is true of the other men. The cloth samples, the stamp, and so forth are not symbols of the group's common enterprise, but the individualized attributes of each person. What unifies the members of the group is no longer the presence of symbolic objects that have a bearing on each of them equally, but the presence of a viewing subject who is able to observe them all simultaneously juxtaposed within the painting.

Be that as it may, the objects still manage to retain a certain amount of symbolic association and, along with it, a seemingly inevitable degree of objectivity. The way the artist handled the facial expressions and the hand positions is further confirmation that the sixth syndic is not alone in his momentary, individualized interaction with the viewer, but that all the others are interacting in the same way. What a sense of urgency there is in their gestures, whether they are displaying a sample of cloth or presenting the company seal! How searching and yet inviting their gazes are!

We need to pay special attention to the figure in the middle of the composition who is counting on his fingers. This motif is a further stage in the idea of the "calculator" that we encountered earlier in Jacobsz.'s *Portrait of a Man* in the Imperial Court Museum in Vienna (fig. 11, p. 106). Its appearance here is highly symptomatic of the evolutionary stage that characterized the art of Holland in the first third of the seventeenth century. Because the motif occurs so frequently in the subsequent period, we can assume it struck a deep chord in the artistic volition of Holland. Here we have a purely mental activity involving abstract concepts (numbers) and requiring the utmost attention; but it is also an activity that can be expressed in concrete, physical terms: the straightforward counting gesture of the fingers; the narrowed eyes under a furrowed brow; the somewhat veiled, inquisitive gaze; the head itself rendered in a more optic than haptic fashion; and, finally, the shimmering areas of

shadow, broken contours, and fluffy hair. Nevertheless, in spite of the many physical details that are used here to suggest an abstract, mental activity, they are actually far fewer than the ones exploited by Jacobsz. for his "calculator" of 1529, which included the actual writing down of the numbers. The expressions of the other cloth assessors in Pietersz.'s painting are more soulful and extroverted.

The pictorial conception of the earliest regent group portrait is therefore exactly the same as the one Pietersz. used for his civic guard group portrait, namely, that each of the sitters is individually in charge of presenting himself to the viewer, whose participation transforms the portrait into a genre scene. Subordination is clearly avoided, though always latently expressed, just as it was in Pietersz.'s two works. In the case of the six cloth assessors, the choice of which one of them has seniority is a draw between the treasurer and the man holding up his right hand toward the viewer.

The composition contains the same kind of inner contradictions that we found in Pietersz.'s work. The heads all look as though they occupy a single plane, that is, as though they were the same distance from the viewer; however, the way the torsos overlap makes it clear that there are four planes involved. The composition, therefore, is still based essentially on the idea of rows, albeit with a very dynamic alignment of the tops of the heads. Although there is no obvious center, the group breaks down clearly into three units of two figures. The surrounding space is cut off on all sides, so that the figures are unquestionably the main focus. Once again, the background is kept quite dark. Nevertheless, a couple of details do help in defining the receding space and how it is related to the figures. First, the two men seated in the foreground are positioned in space by their chairbacks; second, three of the regents' hats cut across a strip of red molding on the background wall directly beneath the frame. It is significant that the artist still felt the need to include details like these to give the space a certain definition and the viewer certain bearings, even though elsewhere he sought a dark effect. His artistic intention was, therefore, just like that of Pietersz., with whom he is perhaps identical: in each case, the heads are primarily responsible for creating the impression of transitory movement within the space, and no details within that space are allowed to draw attention away from them. The dark areas in this painting already represent pure space, just as they do in Rembrandt's first period when he was also primarily concentrating on the heads of his sitters. In the period around 1600, however, these dark areas remain simply that, dark areas; they have not yet developed into chiaroscuro, namely, areas modeled subtly from light to dark, of the kind that Rembrandt produced even in his very earliest works.

The Initial Stages of Group Portraiture in Haarlem

We now arrive at a period when cities in Holland other than Amsterdam began to participate in the evolution of group portraiture. Mierevelt of Delft, some of whose work is contemporaneous with that of Aert Pietersz., is one

artist who stands out from the rest at this time. His career as a group portrait painter certainly deserves further research in its own right; however, his work has little bearing on the evolution of group portraiture in Holland as a whole, and we will have to omit him from the present discussion. The same is true of Ravesteyn of The Hague, whose work, moreover, belongs to the next stage of the evolution as represented by Cornelis van der Voort and Werner van den Valckert in Amsterdam. Only in Haarlem do the initial stages of group portraiture come to have wider significance—especially with the work of Frans Hals, who developed out of them—so we will need to focus particular attention there.

The painters in Haarlem were the sole artists outside of Amsterdam who made the effort to rise above local idiosyncrasies and achieve universally valid solutions to some of the basic problems affecting Holland's artistic volition. Generally speaking, artists in Haarlem preferred to concentrate on the formal, physical aspects of a particular problem, whereas the ones in Amsterdam were naturally drawn to the psychological aspects. On a psychological level, however, the kinds of human emotions that did appeal to the painters of Haarlem were the ones that bonded people together and were expressed in lively physical gestures. By contrast, the painters in Amsterdam were more interested in exploring ways to capture the level of human experience that takes place deep in the mind, in the realm of individual feeling.

Given this essential difference in focus, it goes without saying that Romanist Mannerism, which was responsible for introducing freer, less formal arrangements of figures in the painting of Holland, had a completely different effect in Haarlem than in Amsterdam. For example, even Ketel's flashy guardsmen, despite their jaunty movements, are clearly rather stodgy and self-conscious Hollanders. His contemporary in Haarlem, Cornelis Cornelisz., on the other hand, could hold his head high among Italian painters: for decades, other artists in Holland relied heavily on his nudes, rather than on live models, as their source for the figure. Today, Cornelisz. is summarily dismissed as an arch-Mannerist, and, because he was interested primarily in the physical, formal aspects of his works, his success at raising the level of ambition of his fellow painters in Haarlem is largely ignored.

A civic guard group portrait by Cornelisz. (fig. 33), dated 1583, is in the Haarlem City Museum. Van Mander verified the date and described the work with considerable enthusiasm.[34] The painting is unique, and it gives us an entirely new and unusual perspective on Cornelisz.—both as a painter of group portraiture and as the Romanist specialist in history painting for which he is more generally known—that no one as yet has come even close to appreciating. Part of the problem is that the group is the work of a twenty-one-year-old; sixteen years later, the same artist would be painting civic guard group portraits that, as we shall see, look very different from this one.

Fig. 33. Cornelis Cornelisz.
Civic Guard Banquet of 1583
Haarlem, City Museum

The Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1583 by Cornelis Cornelisz.

In a room with two windows on the rear wall, twenty-two half-length figures are assembled around a table—most of them seated, a few of them standing. Food, plates, and silverware are on the table; some of the men are holding drinking vessels. Obviously, the theme is a fraternal banquet, and we can tell by the standard-bearer in the foreground that it is an official banquet organized by a civic guard. A person taking a casual look at this painting would never recognize it as a group portrait but surely assume it to be a genre scene. The only reason we can spot the theme immediately is because of our specialized historical knowledge. The reason most people are likely to think this work is a genre painting is that the figures are primarily engaged in interacting with each other within the painting, as opposed to interacting with the viewer outside it, as they do in the works of Jacobsz. and Pietersz. Furthermore, there are none of those one-sided relationships among the men familiar to us from the works of Barendsz. and Isaacsz.

Cornelisz. sets up reciprocal relationships between people and objects, or between one person and another. For example, he establishes a connection between a particular individual and his drinking vessel by coordinating the attentive expression on the figure's face with what he is actually doing with his hands. At the same time, the figures are allowed to interact with each other, thus rendering the genre scene complete within itself. These reciprocal relationships make the viewer, whose implied presence was absolutely essential for the pictorial conception of artists working in Amsterdam, superfluous in Haarlem. Here is something new and startling which, because it diminishes the importance of external coherence, initially seems to undermine the basic idea of a group portrait.

Later group portraiture frequently takes up the theme of the civic guard banquet, and, since the overall evolution was in the direction of genre painting, with its delight in more and more details from everyday life, it is not surprising to find these lifelike interactions within the picture becoming more and more popular. Later works, however, are never as turbulent as this earliest of the civic guard group portraits produced in Haarlem, with its genre approach following so abruptly on the heels of the austere, symbolic stage. The figures are arranged as casually as anyone might expect who has ever had the subjective experience of observing people grouped haphazardly around a table, having a good time eating and drinking. In the back row, a man in a light-colored doublet is leaning back, with his face turned toward his neighbor and his left hand placed on his chest as if to reinforce a point. This neighbor, his right hand raised as though taking an oath, is gazing intently back at the man in the light doublet, while placing his left hand on the other's right which is resting on the table. Obviously, an oath of brotherhood is under way, a motif familiar to us from one of the earliest civic guard group portraits, where it served symbolically to unite the members of the group. What is new about Cornelisz.'s version is that the momentary event captured in the painting is self-contained, so that what once was a generalized, sym-

bolic representation is now transformed into an actual event at one particular moment of time.

Cornelisz. did not stop at this single interaction, however: a number of other men in the immediate vicinity also participate in the oath taking of the first two, and are therefore somewhat subordinated to it. A man standing between the oath takers has affectionately placed his hand on the right shoulder of the man in the light doublet, behind whose back a second man, facing into the scene, swears an oath with his right hand raised. Meanwhile, a fifth man, seen in profile on the left-hand edge of the painting, has placed his hand on the right shoulder of the second oath-swearing gentleman seated behind the man in the light doublet.

Only two figures remain in the left half of the picture in the back row: one of them has turned completely to face the other, who, in turn, is looking out at the viewer. This is the only instance in the entire painting of an unreciprocated relationship. However, its one-sidedness is not nearly as pointed and deliberate as it would have been in the work of Barendsz. and Isaacsz. The back row on the right-hand side of the picture is broken down into more groups. One man is leaning back in his chair and staring down into his tankard, presumably checking to see whether he has enough left in it to drink a fraternal toast with the man behind him who is peering over his shoulder. Next to these two is an individual, hat in his left hand, who is holding up his tankard toward the person standing behind him. This standing man seizes the other's tankard in his left hand, while raising his right to swear an oath. These men look straight into each other's eyes. The figures in the back row along the right-hand edge of the painting are casually arranged, and yet the figures are subordinated to a central figure on account of his speech and the accompanying emphatic gesture of his right hand.

The standard-bearer dominates the proceedings in the front row where most of the figures have their backs turned to the viewer. He has risen from his chair, his flag hoisted on his shoulder, and turned to the right to speak, the fingers of his left hand stretched apart in a gesture that is hard to interpret. Two or three of the men in the right-hand side of the painting are paying attention to what he has to say, along with his two closest neighbors on the left—who, to judge by the way the one has placed his hand on the other's shoulder, are good comrades. Because one of the listening men on the right-hand side is about to place his glass to his lips, and another is about to raise his left hand, it seems reasonable to assume that the standard-bearer is also proposing a toast of brotherhood.

Of all the toast drinkers on this side, the only one to make direct eye contact with the viewer is the one seated right next to the standard-bearer. Yet, the way he is responding to the call for a toast is more visually subjective than we have ever seen before: with his right hand, he brings his glass up to his lips, while resting his left on the arm of the chair. The only other guardsman to make eye contact with the viewer is the last one in the front row on the left edge of the painting.

In order to create a scene as lively as this and with this variety of interact-
ing figures, an artist has to know a lot about how the human body moves; and
apparently Cornelisz., even at this early age, was so knowledgeable in this
respect that van Mander, by his own account, was unusually impressed. The
facial expressions and the torsos of the men both seem to be motivated by the
same impulse. Of course, these figures do not have the smooth elegance and
grandeur of their Italian counterparts; to the modern viewer, however, their
rough-and-ready, almost rustic appearance makes them look all the more nat-
ural and true to life: in other words, more subjectively convincing.

Now, one might expect a Romanist-inclined Mannerist to have no prob-
lem at all in applying subordination to his composition, but this is definitely
not the case with Cornelisz.: his consistent effort to avoid subordination
betrays his origins in Holland. The commanding officers are nowhere to be
found, and even the standard-bearer[35] subordinates no more than a small
number of the men. Besides, we have already discovered the same kind of
grouping, similar to the one involving him and other members of the front
row, in the left half of the back row, not to mention an additional one on the
right-hand side associated with the man holding his hat and raising up his
tankard — to the degree that, at least superficially, he appears to be subordi-
nating the figures to his immediate left and right. Obviously, the device of
figure-grouping is an integral part of Cornelisz.'s pictorial conception. Because,
however, the relationships within each group are based on subordination, each
group is internally coherent, resulting in a coordinated relationship among the
groups themselves. Relatively speaking, the figure-groupings in this painting
are more self-contained than those in the civic guard group portraits produced
in Amsterdam, for, while the artists in Amsterdam may have shied away from
clearly subdividing their figures, they still expected their individual sitters to
subordinate themselves in some way to the presiding captain.

Therefore, regardless of which aspect we consider, the painting still looks
first and foremost like a genre interpretation of a banquet and not like a group
portrait. The motifs of drinking a toast or swearing an oath have lost all their
symbolic associations, and they represent nothing more than momentary and
individual activities appropriate to a genre scene. Van Mander irrefutably
confirms our assumptions by the way he, from his contemporary viewpoint,
describes how the men in the painting are portrayed with all of their personal
idiosyncrasies: "those who were much in each other's company are shown
extending their hands; the ones who liked to drink are shown with a tankard
or a glass." Once these motifs had lost their generally accepted, symbolic
meaning, the artist could no longer rely on them to unify the group. What
does unify the group is the banquet itself and all the various activities going
on: the oath taking, the toasting, and the drinking. As a genre scene of a
banquet per se, its exuberant spirit surpasses even that of Bruegel the Elder's
peasant feasts.

Let us not, however, lose sight of the fact that the Haarlem civic guard
commissioned Cornelisz. to paint a group portrait and not a genre scene.

Even though the artist's basic idea was to capture the group's members as they casually engage in characteristic activities, he also had to come to terms with his commitment as a portrait painter. So now we have to examine the figures in the painting for their portrait quality to find out how successful Cornelisz. was in carrying out his obligation.

It has always seemed to be something of a contradiction that Cornelisz., a Mannerist painter par excellence, was able to paint such striking likenesses of his sitters. In this painting, some of the likenesses are so strong that even an artist who did nothing besides portrait painting would be happy to claim them as his own — always supposing that he had been asked to insert the portraits into the context of a history or genre painting. Cornelisz. never again made this kind of effort, not even in his group portrait of 1599; however, in his civic guard group portrait of 1583, he was unquestionably concerned about portrait quality.

One has to be careful not to let the figures' vigorous physical actions, such as leaning backward and forward, which are the major cause of the apparent disorder, blind one to the underlying ceremonious seriousness and awkward stiffness in the painting, as found in the various groups of men swearing fraternal allegiance who are showing off for the benefit of the viewer in an objective manner. These are the very qualities, easily overlooked at first, that mark the painting as the work of an artist from Holland who was still basically and characteristically concerned about external coherence. Bruegel the Elder's peasant paintings, of course, do a much better job of making this connection than does Cornelisz.'s banquet scene, and they lack the same degree of superficial movement.

Next, let us return to the three men who are looking directly out at the viewer. The one to the right of the standard-bearer looks and drinks at the same time, thereby exemplifying the old, antiquated dichotomy between physical and psychological motivation (he wants a drink, but at the same time his attention is distracted by the viewer). This dichotomy is familiar to us from the important role it plays in group portraiture in Amsterdam; in Haarlem, it occurs only rarely. Therefore, it would be going too far to say that this Haarlem civic guard group portrait of 1583 is a pure genre scene, and thus overlook the portrait likenesses of the sitters and the attempts made to interact with the viewer. We are forced to admit, however, that these features are not nearly enough in themselves to justify us in declaring this work a prime example of Holland's national style of group portraiture. If nothing else, the unusual number of heads seen in profile disqualify it from consideration. Furthermore, the more genre character a given portrait head contains — in other words, the more the sitters are expected to participate in lifelike, momentary activities — the less effective it is as a portrait. A good example of this is the man on the right-hand side who is checking how much he has left to drink: the head of the figure is rendered in a way worthy of one of Hals's pupils, someone like Jan Molenaer; however, it is not a successful portrait.

Cornelisz.'s civic guard group portrait of 1583 illustrates perfectly that

whenever genre wins the upper hand, portraiture ceases to be portraiture. A genre scene requires the figures to be totally interconnected, virtually fused with each other; since it consists so essentially of this interaction, it is bound to suppress the figures' individuality. The same thing happens to the figures when the space separating them becomes the main theme of a painting. The increased number of genre components in a portrait did have the positive effect of heightening subjectivity; however, the artists of Holland never went so far as to transform their portraits completely into genre scenes, just as, conversely, they always took pains to individualize the features of the figures in genre scenes. In the early 1580s in Haarlem, however, artists were apparently so infatuated with their newfound freedom to manipulate the movements of the human body that they neglected everything that did not directly contribute to playing up the extroverted relationships of their figures, and that included even the objective appearance of facial features. This also explains how it came about that an "arch-Mannerist" like Cornelisz. was the first one to transform radically the group portrait into a genre scene. As a Romanist, he conceived of scenes in terms of self-contained actions, so that, faced with this given theme (a group portrait commission), his only choice was to treat it like a genre scene.

The composition is based on a mixture of space-creating devices and linear structures. A spatial center is created by the table. Although the viewer's point of view is still relatively high, not much of the tabletop is visible: the few areas not blocked by the figures in the front row are obscured by bowls, plates, knives, and food. We see the backs of five figures in the foreground row, only one of whom looks out at the viewer, as in Barendsz.'s works. Apparently, Cornelisz. assumed that this one figure was enough to establish the external coherence necessary in a portrait, since the other four men are in profile. The foreground space therefore excludes the viewer even more effectively here than in Pietersz.'s anatomy lesson of twenty years later.

The alignment of the tops of the figures' heads is intentionally erratic. It successfully destroys any impression of horizontal order, even though there is, as one might expect, one row of figures in front of the banquet table and one behind. In accordance with subjective, optical experience, the figures in the front row are larger than the ones in the back; the standard-bearer in particular is something of a giant. Add to this the startling difference in size between his huge ruff and the more modest ones of his neighbors, and it becomes obvious that the artist saw him as a device for directing the viewer's attention, akin to the ungainly shepherd on the left-hand side of Correggio's *La notte*. The flag, wrapped around the pole, is a splendid contrivance of spatial recession. Finally, the distribution of lights and darks is another effective means of creating the illusion of space, especially in keeping the front row separate from the back, even though the painting in itself is fairly monotonous and not particularly colorful. Once again, the standard-bearer plays a role, along with his neighbor to the left and the man in the light doublet leaning back in his chair on the other side of the table.

Of course, Cornelisz. had to find a way of balancing out the devices that

intensified the illusion of subjectively perceived space with linear elements that tie the composition together diagonally within a plane. The flagstaff is the dominant line that functions as the symmetrical center, even though it slants from top left to bottom right instead of being vertical. The axes of the men leaning back in their chairs to either side run parallel to the flagstaff; not until the edges of the painting is there a gradual shift back to verticality. An Italian artist would have naturally felt the need to include diagonal lines running in the opposite direction to balance the composition overall; however, such countermovements are almost completely absent here. Therefore, even the way Cornelisz. thought out the linear relationships in this early work shows that he is a one-sided Hollander. He simply substituted diagonals slanting in one direction, and without any countermovement, for the monotonous vertical axes preferred by his earlier colleagues. The diagonal slash of the flagstaff is, however, kept somewhat in check by a few verticals and horizontals, particularly the ones created by the windows.

Lastly, let us look at the background. As yet, there is no free space between the back wall and the figures in the back row, who as a result are packed tightly together with no air to breathe, mercilessly squeezed between wall and table. On the other hand, the view out the left-hand window is remarkably advanced. Here we find foliage, close enough to touch, hanging down from the branches of trees that are cut off at the top by the frame; between them is nothing but the bright sky. No more mountains and cities off in the distance are needed to symbolize infinite space for the figures in the foreground: Cornelisz. has turned to the heavens themselves to represent infinite free space.

We have made such a close analysis of Cornelisz.'s civic guard group portrait of 1583 for a number of reasons. First of all, it was important to have a more impartial view of this artist and his significance for the history of painting in Holland. We have been able to document what is typical of Holland in his early work and to show what an essential influence he had on painting in Holland even after his later conversion to Mannerism. Secondly, it was important to find out whether this particular work contributed anything significant to the evolution of group portrait painting. Now, no one would try to argue that it represents any kind of definitive solution to the problems of group portraiture, since it successfully skirts some of the most vital issues, such as the portrait quality of the heads and external coherence. Nevertheless, it is groundbreaking in two ways. First of all, it contains the first instance in group portraiture of figures who are directly interacting with each other, a device that is essential for creating an impression of unity within the picture. Secondly, the illusion of space is much more developed here than in the works of Cornelisz.'s colleagues in Amsterdam. Furthermore, it directly inspired Frans Hals's earliest civic guard group portrait of 1616, and, as we will see, even provided some of the poses for Hals's figures.

Cornelis Cornelisz. himself soon became acutely aware of the excesses of his youthful work, and, in the second group portrait we have by him, it is obvious that he is making an effort to correct some of them.

Fig. 34. Cornelis Cornelisz.
Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1599
Haarlem, City Museum

The Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1599 by Cornelis Cornelisz.

Cornelisz.'s second group portrait is another civic guard banquet scene, also located in the Haarlem City Museum (fig. 34). It is signed and dated 1599. The catalog entry reads "Banquet of the officers of a corps of musketeers," which is exactly what one would conclude from their dress.

The painting shows how, after the period of reform, the civic guard companies in Haarlem took on a character somewhat different from those in Amsterdam with which we are familiar. Even under the new regulations, the civic guard organizations in both cities were still tied to the old guilds. In Amsterdam, however, these ties were of almost no significance, and instead new subdivisions, such as companies, half companies, and corporalships, were formed. In Haarlem, on the other hand, the corps of musketeers that arose out of the guild was more emphatically a single entity. This explains why the civic guard group portraits produced in Amsterdam from the time of Ketel always include officers — a captain, a lieutenant, and a standard-bearer — in addition to the ordinary guardsmen. On the other hand, in Haarlem, especially from Hals onward, the ordinary guardsmen gradually disappear from group portraits, crowded out by an ever-increasing number of officers, usually including a number of standard-bearers. Obviously, the organization in Haarlem had become more aristocratic, while the one in Amsterdam managed to remain true to its democratic principles. As a result, the idea of subordinating the members of the group to the captain developed more strongly in Amsterdam, while in Haarlem, since there were no common guardsmen to subordinate, the officers naturally tended to balance each other out.

This background makes it clear right from the start why the pictorial conception of group portraiture evolved so differently in each of these two cities. The group portraits done by artists living in Amsterdam, who were receptive to the idea of subordination, even if only to a limited extent, came very close to history painting, especially under Rembrandt. The idea behind the group portraits done by artists in Haarlem, on the other hand, as we have just discussed above, was of a genre scene; as a result, there is a certain degree of internal coherence. This did not, however, go beyond merely coordinating the subgroups, which were subordinated within themselves into an internally coherent unit. This explains why artists in Haarlem never took up the theme of the anatomy lesson, whose problems artists in Amsterdam were able to solve from the very beginning simply by subordinating, however unobtrusively, all the members of the group to a single individual. It also explains why they attempted a regent group portrait only at a very late date, and then only, as we shall see, under obvious influence from Amsterdam.

For anyone who comes to the present painting fresh from Cornelisz.'s civic guard group portrait of 1583, it is hard to believe that it is by the very same artist: it is so peaceful and relaxed, so solemn and dignified compared to the earlier, turbulent scene with its plebeian men engaged in all sorts of vigorous movements. Two men occupy each side of a square table, all seated except for one standing figure; four additional figures stand near

the back wall which contains a window. All the men are roughly half-length figures.

No less than half of the figures are looking out of the pictorial space, as compared to a mere three out of twenty-two in the earlier painting. They are primarily the ones forming a semicircle in the foreground closest to the viewer. Their gazes are attentively fixed on a variety of undefined points located outside the picture, not on any of their colleagues. The two men sitting with their backs to the viewer turn their heads to look out of the painting at such an acute angle to the picture plane that they cannot possibly be seeking eye contact with a viewer as understood in any modern sense. Cornelisz.'s "viewer" was obviously still a multiple phenomenon and not a homogeneous entity. This is the type of relatively objective conception of the viewing subject familiar to us from Teunissen's and Ketel's works, and no surprise in the hands of a Romanist painter. The two men are making momentary, individual gestures with their right hands in the same direction as their gazes, as though greeting one or more friends (perhaps approaching comrades?).

The man seated on the right-hand side of the table is pointing to a dish of poultry with his right hand, and, because he is also one of the musketeers looking out at the viewer, he, too, seems to be inviting someone outside the picture space to join in the feast. In this respect, Cornelisz. seems to have reverted to the old habits of his colleagues in Amsterdam who brought a certain sense of unity into their paintings by having the individual sitters direct their attention in the general direction of the viewer. The advantages of this device are, first, that the figures are positioned frontally, therefore optimally for a portrait, and second, that they are freed from the need for involvement in any further activity. However, our ambitious Romanist did not rest content with a one-sided device that left his figures staring out of the picture. Instead, he brought the six figures in the background into a genrelike relationship with each other by arranging them in two self-contained groups: one in the middle ground and one in the background.

The group in the middle ground consists of two men seated directly opposite the viewer; it is not quite as self-contained as the analogous oath-taking scenes in 1583. The figures' interactions have taken on some of the one-sidedness common in the painting of Amsterdam: the passive member of the group does not return the gaze of his partner, but looks out of the pictorial space at an angle. His only response is to lay his right hand on his chest. The active member of the pair shows his keen interest in his neighbor in a number of ways: first, by placing his hand on the other man's shoulder, then by presenting the glass of wine, and finally by turning his head to the side in the other man's direction.

Even the profile pose in itself seems slightly forced, however, in a way that can be explained only by the conflicting demands of portraiture and genre. In the case of the four men at the back, Cornelisz. took the liberty of bypassing this conflict by largely ignoring the portrait aspect — just as he has sacrificed internal coherence in the foreground figures. In the case of the four men in the

background, he did the opposite. All four men are taking an oath of allegiance. The man doing the actual swearing is the one to the right of the flagstaff, to whom the standard-bearer is presenting the flag, while an older officer administers the oath, as indicated by his raised left hand. Meanwhile, a fourth man with a halberd assists the oath taker. These two are looking straight over to the administrator, so that they are both seen in complete profile; consequently, their effect as portraits is practically nil. The administrator, whose eyes are fixed directly on the oath taker, is shown in three-quarter view, while the standard-bearer, half-turned toward the older gentleman, is seen almost full face. All of this adds up to a full-fledged genre scene which is so solemn and ceremonious in appearance that it could pass for an actual, historical episode. The price paid, however, is that the heads of two individuals, who obviously did not have much status in the fraternity, have lost almost all of their character as portraits.

The solution that Cornelisz. found for the pictorial conception was something like this: like his colleagues in Amsterdam, he set up foreground figures capable of open, genrelike interaction with imaginary persons outside the painting (external coherence). The figures in the background, however, behave like their counterparts in 1583: they interact among themselves within self-contained groups (internal coherence). This is precisely the kind of pictorial conception that appears later in Hals's earliest group portraits, and the one most typical of Haarlem. The progress with respect to the painting of 1583 can be seen in that the source of unity within the painting (the banquet) and the relationship between the banqueters and the viewer without (the portrait aspect) were totally at odds with each other. Here, by contrast, the portrait heads of the figures in the foreground, with their backs turned to the viewer, create a transition to the self-contained genre scene in the back. The Amsterdam habit of showing the figures in their paintings interacting with the viewer never found any resonance in Haarlem during the entire second period of group portraiture in Holland.

The pictorial conception of Cornelisz.'s second banquet scene relies even less on emphasizing the officers as a means of introducing subordination than the earlier version did. Once again, the standard-bearer is one of the most conspicuous figures, but his prominence is now considerably reduced: like the two men seen in profile, he is subordinate to the administrator of the oath. Moreover, his lowered gaze and right hand placed on his breast gives him an air of devout humility. Now, the administrator of the oath may have the upper hand in the background group, but he is surely not the man with the highest rank. The distinction of captain is reserved for the man in the feathered cap seated under the awning, who is delicately holding a glass in his right hand and staring off into the blue. Here we find the Romanist Cornelisz. showing himself to be a true Hollander: first, he reduced to two the number of officers who needed to be distinguished in some way. Then, he put one of them, the standard-bearer, into a subordinate position. Finally, he gave the captain a completely insignificant role. On the other hand, Cornelisz. made

the two ordinary guardsmen seen in profile in the background group far more subordinate than is anyone found in a civic guard group portrait by an artist in Amsterdam from the same period.

Obviously, Cornelisz. made these changes in the pictorial conception of the later banquet scene because he consciously wanted to make the painting into more of a group portrait than its predecessor of 1583; and in this he undoubtedly succeeded. This intent is clear from the start: the later painting may remind us of the group portraits produced in Amsterdam, but in a completely different way from the earlier banquet. And even though the heads of all the figures, with the exception of those of the two men in the background, are turned more directly toward the viewer, and so few members of the group are interacting with their colleagues to the point that it distracts from their individuality, it is still a question as to whether these things enhance the portrait quality or not.

The answer to this question is a decisive no. Cornelis Cornelisz. was a Mannerist history painter and therefore much more preoccupied with unifying his composition by manipulating line and movement as a whole than he was bothered about minute details. Almost all of the men have the same elongated faces, pointed beards, long noses, and smooth cheeks, so that a number of them could actually pass for brothers. Moreover, the expressions on these stereotyped heads show little character. Only a few of them convey the sense of a living individual caught in a particular moment of time that results from the resolute attempts of the artists of Holland to portray attentiveness. The men's clothing and hair, as well as their postures and gestures, are fashionable and conventional. On the one hand, these things contribute something to the unity of the group; on the other, they further reduce the figures' individuality. Cornelisz. has toned down the mannered movements of the men, so that not even the guardsman standing in the foreground on the right-hand side bears any resemblance to the type of overdressed officers that Hendrik Goltzius, Cornelisz.'s closest like-minded colleague, was engraving at approximately the same time. So, although the painting of 1599 makes a much better group portrait than that of 1583, the individual portraits are much weaker.

Cornelisz. also toned down the composition. The heads of the figures are very conspicuously grouped in pairs, which, in turn, fall into a pattern, albeit very loosely, of staggered rows. We also find him again relying on one-sided diagonals as a means of integrating the composition within a plane, and again they run from upper left to lower right. They are, however, formed by the heads, the ruff collars, and the more brightly illuminated sashes, and not, as previously, by flagstaffs and the slanting upper bodies of the figures. Diagonals running in the opposite direction, such as the flagstaff, are very weak.

In spite of this increased emphasis on planar elements, the spatial composition is also decidedly more advanced. The figures are now grouped much more freely around the spatial center of the table; there is, however, still no sign that Cornelisz. was beginning to become interested in depicting the atmosphere around it. Furthermore, the baldachin over the chair of the

captain succeeds in creating free space within the interior. The artist no longer relies on obvious devices, such as the flagstaff in the painting of 1583, to introduce the idea of recession into the painting, and once again we are given a view out of a window onto the leafy branches of the trees outside, silhouetted sharply against the small patches of bright sky that can be seen through them.

Even in Haarlem, viewers had come to expect a greater degree of subjectively convincing spatial illusion in painting in the course of the intervening sixteen years, and Cornelisz. obviously took this into account. At the same time, however, he strengthened the objective linear structure of his composition by abandoning the idea of horizontal discontinuity and making the smaller units roughly conform to a staggered pattern. This arrangement is familiar to us from the paintings of 1534 and 1563; now, however, instead of individual portrait heads, Cornelisz. places pairs.

A misunderstanding of the role of late sixteenth-century Romanist Mannerism in Holland is to blame for the lack of recognition of Cornelisz.'s work and of his crucial importance for the subsequent evolution of group portraiture in Haarlem. The Mannerism of the Romanists is often considered to be an aberration instead of a natural and necessary germ for the subsequent evolution. Even artists in Amsterdam were aware of Cornelisz.'s significance. Van Mander mentions in his appendix that Gerrit Pietersz., one of Cornelisz.'s pupils, was invited to Amsterdam in 1604 to paint a civic guard group portrait for the Sebastiansdoelen, and that it turned out especially well. Hymans, in his edition of van Mander, mistakenly attributes the painting to Cornelisz. himself. Unfortunately, the work has not survived.

The Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1610 by Frans Pietersz. Grebber

Frans Pietersz. Grebber was the most popular group portrait painter in Haarlem between the period of Cornelis Cornelisz. and Frans Hals. Some of Grebber's works are contemporary with Hals's first, groundbreaking group portrait of 1616, by which time, however, the older artist's influence was already in decline. In 1610, however, his large civic guard group portrait (fig. 35) incorporating forty-six figures, now in the Haarlem City Museum, completely lived up to his contemporaries' expectations.

Grebber chose the theme of the banquet, but his arrangement of the figures into two rows strongly counteracts the function of a spatial center. The figures are mostly looking passively out at the viewer, their expressions rarely accompanied by any momentary gestures. The members of a number of the smaller units are engaged with each other in the typical Haarlem manner. What is unusual about them, however, is that they often look attentively out at the viewer (a situation that resembles the one-sided relationships preferred by artists in Amsterdam), at the same time making concrete, physical gestures that demonstrate their attentiveness to each other.

For example, in the foreground, where we naturally look first, we discover a man who is speaking to the standard-bearer and at the same time touching him on the arm with the back of his hand. Next to this speaker is a standing

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figure looking out at the viewer; the seated man beside him leans in his direction, taking hold of his coat. Meanwhile, behind the seated foreground figure, a man at table is about to carve a roast, but his head is twisted back over his shoulder, in response to the hand placed there by the comrade behind him. A third figure inserts his head between the carver and the man behind him; this third figure holds a glass and pays no attention whatsoever to the two interacting figures, although his presence intervenes between them. Moreover, the same is true of the other two groups just described: in both, the interacting members are separated by one or two faces whose attention is not focused on the group but somewhere else. Another example is the group on the raised platform directly above the group with the carver. A similar need to have something physically dividing the members of a group who are psychologically interacting is also apparent in the relationship between two figures in the left half of the painting. One of them stands at the left-hand end of the banquet table and raises his glass to pledge the health of a man conspicuously leaning over the railing of the platform.

Clearly, Grebber was attempting the same kind of solution that Cornelisz. used for his civic guard group portrait of 1599. First, he divided the larger group into smaller units of integrated genre scenes coordinated with each other; then, he injected the smaller units with figures that interact with the viewer to create the external coherence expected in Holland.

In the entire painting there is only one instance where three figures form a psychologically coherent unit, namely, in the back row of the table about midway on the long side. Grebber obviously borrowed the motif from Cornelisz.'s oath-taking scene of 1583. All three of the men are interacting with a jug that the first man holds aslant with both hands in front of himself, while the other two point at it. One of the pointing men has placed his hand on the shoulder of the other pointer, who, in turn, looks out of the painting in a bid for the viewer's attention. The three of them are therefore conscious of the fact that there is someone outside of the painting who is looking in at them, and they are at pains to include that person in their group. As a result, however, the internal context of the genre scene — the drinking of a toast of brotherhood — is disrupted, and the appeal to the viewer's presence does nothing to create coherence. This, as we know, was one of the main, perennial problems in group portraiture at this time, both in Haarlem and Amsterdam, namely, how to create an internal context among the figures while also establishing an external context that includes the viewer. Grebber seems to have devised an original approach to the problem, if not a truly satisfying solution. Seen from this perspective, one can appreciate how much Hals had his work cut out for him, since he had little to build on from his predecessors. Nevertheless, Grebber was unquestionably one of the most capable portrait painters of his day, as confirmed by the heads of some of the figures in the foreground on the right and on the raised platform.

The composition, as said before, is basically of rows lined up in planes. However, as we saw as early as 1583, the figures' heads are not confined by a

horizontal line, nor are they restricted to vertical axes; the line joining the crowns of the heads is a fairly regular zigzag, and the axes of heads and torsos are frequently oblique. Moreover, Grebber did not restrict himself to one-way diagonals, as Cornelisz. did even as late as 1599 but especially in 1583; however, it is not as varied as an Italian artist might have made it, such that major contrasts of linear movements would result. Instead, he varied the diagonals on a small scale and as frequently as possible, which resulted not in an impression of extreme contrappostos in equilibrium but in flickering, hectic, tirelessly repeated antitheses. This nullifies the calming, unified effect of planar composition without establishing any sort of spatial composition. Here is another problem that Hals would have to solve.

All the same, a few details indicate some improvement in the direction of spatial illusion, such as the raised platform in the background that houses the back row of men, with a suggestion of stairs in the figures descending to the right. This was a solution that an artist in Amsterdam had tried seven years earlier.[36] Further evidence of improvement in spatial illusion is provided by the dark, blank surface above the guardsmen on the right, which diagonally balances out the spatial center of the foreground table in the left half. Grebber made no attempt to fill this empty area with atmosphere; this is nevertheless the first civic guard group portrait to have the tops of the figures' heads appear so low in an interior setting, even though it contrasts strongly with the level of the figures high up on the raised platform on the other side. He was acknowledging the existence of that aspect of the composition that contains no human figures, in fact, no solid objects at all. This is not an easy thing to do in a portrait, and as a result, he earns our praise as a herald of the evolution to come in the seventeenth century.

The Solution of the Problem of External Coherence in Space and Time in the Group Portraiture of Amsterdam

Amsterdam and Haarlem are not even seventeen kilometers apart, and yet each city persisted in maintaining its own idiosyncratic approach to group portraiture for at least half a century. The Haarlem strategy was to divide the larger group into a number of little genre scenes in which some of the figures function to establish internal coherence, while others establish external coherence with the viewer. The idea appealed only rarely to artists in Amsterdam where it found few followers. One of these rare examples is the civic guard group portrait that is no. 32 [RM no. SK-C-407] in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 36), bearing the date 1613, and attributed in the catalog to Frans Badens—the grounds for the attribution being that a group portrait by Badens is listed in the old records. Six, however, has reascribed the work to the Amsterdam artist Jan Tengnagel because the date on the list is 1618 rather than 1613, the one in the painting. The work is not of any particular quality or historical importance, and it had virtually no influence on the overall subsequent evolution, but it nevertheless serves as a rare example that even in Amsterdam there was an occasional exception to the rule.

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Fig. 35. Frans Pietersz. Grebber
Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1610
Haarlem, City Museum

Fig. 36. Anonymous (Jan Tengnagel?)
Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1613
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

The pictorial conception of the painting consists of a civic guard banquet of seventeen figures divided into smaller, self-contained units that succeed in establishing neither internal nor external coherence. In the foreground, a rather diffident standard-bearer has approached the men seated around the table to ask whether he might join them. The captain, easily recognizable by his enormous girth and by the fact that he is the only one wearing a hat, turns to the new arrival and invites him with a slight flick of the wrist to take a seat on an upholstered stool just vacated by a third man who offers it to the standard-bearer with a comically ceremonial gesture. Meanwhile, three figures are seated behind the table: one of them is cutting bread, while another fellow places his hand on the bread cutter's wrist, and the two of them are looking at each other; a third man, tucked in between them, is having his wineglass filled by a fourth. To the left of this unit, four men in the background swear a fraternal oath. To the right, we find a treasurer involved in the kind of finger-counting familiar to us from figure 32; two men seem to be listening to him. Finally, there is a group of three men to the extreme right of the foreground. One of them is about to remove a wine jug from the other's grasp, while the third man stakes a claim to the contents of the jug by turning his empty glass upside down.

This painting seems closer to becoming an actual genre scene than what Cornelisz. had dared produce in 1583. Only three figures are looking vaguely in the direction of the viewer, seemingly by accident, and not as though they were really searching for anything in particular outside the picture space. A true portrait painter would never have gone this far. The portrait heads of the figures are further proof that the artist was not really a portraitist; although two or three of them are passable, the rest are pretty much standardized, especially around the eyes. At the same time, however, the painting is not a successful genre scene: the unmistakably forced and self-conscious expressions of most of the figures clearly show that they are aware of the viewer's presence.

For the composition, this artist, too, chose to divide the men into groups, at the same time relating the spatial center around the central table to the symmetrical composition within a plane. Along the central axis there is a gap between the two groups of figures, so that there is no central figure at all but rather empty space. Thus, the artist has avoided severe subordination in his composition as conscientiously as in his pictorial conception, in which the captain barely manages to assert himself even within his own little group; only external attributes distinguish him from the others.

With the exception of a few isolated and insignificant examples like this one, the artists of Amsterdam preferred their own approach. For them, the most crucial aspect of a group portrait by far was its external coherence, namely, the rapport with the viewer, whom they thought of in the plural. The internal coherence, on the other hand, was secondary and interesting only as an aid to external coherence. The Haarlem approach of having interacting figures within the painting, so that at least some of them establish a degree of

internal coherence, was at first fundamentally rejected in Amsterdam. Artists never allowed individual figures to interact with each other; all that was permitted was a subordinate relationship with the viewer.

External coherence grew ever more specific in space and time during the second period of group portraiture: first of all, the number of viewers was reduced and their standpoint more localized, so that fewer and fewer of those disconcerting instances occur where figures gaze about in all directions. Secondly, the activities that engage the individual figures with the viewer are brought within a single moment, or at least approximately so. This shared moment immediately establishes an internal coherence among the figures without any need for subordination. Admitting a limited internal coherence, but yet not freeing it to achieve autonomous meaning, makes the external coherence more intense and more convincing than ever.

Neither Ketel nor Aert Pietersz. attempted to limit the viewer to a specific standpoint in front of the picture, nor to limit the activity to a moment in time. The commander who is the subject of the presentation in Ketel's work looks out at a particular point in the audience, but most of the other men in the group direct their attention in various ways. In Aert Pietersz.'s works, each of the men is responsible for presenting himself, which makes it seem as though the imaginary viewers form a more compact group; however, it is doubtful that all the actions of the men we see in the painting could ever have actually occurred at the same time. Consequently, what is still missing from Ketel's group portrait is the relative unity of space (the point at which the figures' attention is directed), and what Pietersz.'s painting lacks is the unity of time. The problem of the second period of group portraiture in Holland — establishing external coherence in space and time — still remained unsolved.

Two decades separate Pietersz.'s works at the beginning of the seventeenth century from the first real solution of these problems in 1624. A large number of important works from the intervening years have survived, and the artists who produced them were clearly aware of the main problems and of the direction in which group portraiture was developing in general. However, they still clung to the old tradition that portrait figures should always be kept separate and independent of each other. To judge by the Rijksmuseum catalog, Cornelis van der Voort was the most important artist in Amsterdam during this period. I beg to differ, for, in my opinion, there were other, anonymous artists who played at least as important a role.

The Regent Group Portrait of 1618 by Cornelis van der Voort

Only one regent group portrait, that of the Oudemannenhuis (men's almshouse), is signed by van der Voort, and thus it is almost certainly his work: no. 1587 [AHM no. A 7436] in the Rijksmuseum, dated 1618 (fig. 37). Compared to the regent group portrait in the manner of Aert Pietersz. (fig. 32) that predates it by nineteen years, van der Voort's work has made obvious and great strides in specifying the external coherence. In the earlier version, the regents are absorbed in their own gestures with little regard for each other.

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Fig. 37. Cornelis van der Voort
Regent Group Portrait of 1618
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Fig. 38. Anonymous
Civic Guard Group Portrait of between 1615 and 1625
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

What unites them as a group is that, as each carries out his own particular genrelike activity, he also turns to look out at the viewer. It is impossible, however, that *one* viewing subject could ever have actually caught a glimpse of these six men doing what they are doing in *one* moment of time. Even though each one is captured in an everyday, genrelike action, the portrait does not come close to looking like a genre painting as we understand it today, and the missing ingredient is a unified moment of time.

In the case of van der Voort's painting, by contrast, we are immediately tempted to ascribe to it the unity of a genre painting—presupposing, of course, that we use our imaginations to supply one or more figures who are not visible in the picture but presumably standing in front of it. And, because we know that the men in the portrait were the regents of an almshouse for old men, we can imagine the unseen party in the viewer's space as a needy elderly person (or several of them) who is seeking some form of assistance. Now, four of the six men in the painting are directing their eyes toward the applicant as though asking him (or them) for the date of the last support payment. The anticipated answer is apparently a specific year, because the regent with the key to the archive is already reaching up to one of the registers, conspicuously stored up high, to select the volume with the appropriate date. The regent seated at the table has placed his left hand expectantly on his chest, as he holds a pen in his right, poised to make the necessary entry in the book lying open before him. A third regent, seated in the extreme foreground on the right in front of the table, has just finished examining a document submitted in support of the application and is waiting in a more passive mode for the information requested. Even the bare-headed servant, who obviously has no role to play in the official transactions of the regents and is therefore standing in the background by the open door, looks the applicant, to whose sphere of activity he belongs in a figurative sense, squarely in the eyes. So far, we find perfect external coherence in combination with genre activities occurring in a single moment of time.

The two remaining figures do not make eye contact with the imagined party outside the picture space. Instead, they turn toward each other at just enough of an angle to make it look as though they are interacting in a totally new way that would have been completely unprecedented in the painting of Amsterdam, resembling more the Haarlem approach. With very rare exceptions—like the one in figure 39—artists in Amsterdam since the time of Barendsz. had never allowed their figures to develop more than one-sided relationships. Van der Voort's strategy, however, is very different from the Haarlem approach. His figures are not subordinating themselves within each of their units to a prescribed activity, such as toasting brotherhood or taking an oath, nor do they form self-contained genre scenes like their counterparts in paintings by Cornelisz. The groups formed by van der Voort's figures are also not like Grebber's, namely, partly closed but also partly open and still in contact with the viewer. In Cornelisz.'s paintings, only one person speaks, while the others listen; here, two men are clearly conversing, as indicated by

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the traditional speaking gesture with the index finger of the outstretched hand. In fact, there seems to be something of a debate going on between them, and this creates the impression that what they are doing is happening at the same moment as all the other genre activities. One could imagine that they are at odds about the merits of the application under consideration, for example; and even if this particular interpretation is not precisely correct, the basic idea cannot be too far off the mark.

In Cornelisz.'s painting of 1599, the genre scenes in the background, with their internal coherence, and the gestures in the foreground, directed at an unseen party in the viewer's space in order to establish the external coherence, are entirely independent of one another, so that they fall apart almost completely. Van der Voort, however, is the first artist to make an attempt to rectify this situation. He does so by allowing two figures to interact in a genrelike fashion, but within a context that still privileges the external coherence that was traditionally the crucial ingredient of group portraiture in Amsterdam. Furthermore, the effect is not forced, as in Grebber's work, but entirely natural. The dualism of two entirely incompatible processes, such as was still seen in Cornelisz.'s work of 1599, is avoided because both the direct interaction of the four regents with the applicant and the debate between the other two regents could pertain to the unseen party located in the viewer's space. On the other hand, they *need* not be related; therefore, the painting still lacks a compelling and necessary reason for such a connection.

Furthermore, a sense of unity is lacking, even within each of the two groups. As mentioned before, both of the debaters are speaking at the same time, and thus each attempts to subordinate the other, a situation reminiscent of the group with Julian the Apostate in Geertgen's *Legend of Saint John*. The relationship of the four regents to the applicant is also not as clear as it might be in a case of perfect coherence, and as it would, in fact, become — to get ahead of ourselves a little — in a very few years. The unseen applicant — or, to be more precise, the unseen applicant's response to the question already posed by the regents — is, as we know, the factor that lends coherence to the scene. If we could detect which regent is actually asking the question, then we would have an even better understanding of the situation. That, however, would have placed the figure asking the question in a position to subordinate the other members of the group, an idea apparently still incompatible with the individualism of the Hollanders. None of the four officiating regents gives us any indication that he has just asked a question. Models of equanimity, they all sit, equally passive and patient, caught in the midst of unfinished business that will only be resolved by the unseen party outside the picture space.

This regent group portrait, therefore, comes very close to perfecting external coherence and locating it in a specific time and place. The only thing preventing the accomplishment of this interim goal was that this artist from Amsterdam was not prepared to take full advantage of subordination, the most effective means of integrating figures within a group. Both he and his clients were apparently still unwilling to go that far.

There are also several new and unusual things to note about the composition. For the first time, the group is situated in an interior that is defined not only by a wall in the background but also by a wall on one of the sides, in this case the left, so that the scene seems to be taking place in the corner of a room. The figures themselves are grouped around the spatial center created by the table. The positioning of their heads sets up a fairly regular, though rather steep, zigzag pattern that connects them within a plane; here we see how well van der Voort had profited from his predecessors' experience in the expert handling of diagonals.

Another first to Van der Voort's credit is the large amount of space he left to circulate around the figures, so that they are not so crowded together or jammed into a narrow space between a table and a wall. Furthermore, he lightened the areas around the figures' contours, especially around the hats, so that they stand out against the gray of the background wall and create the illusion of space behind them. And so begins the representation of free space that integrates figures so effectively and dissolves their contours into the surrounding space. The representation of free space is, of course, the first step in the direction of chiaroscuro painting. Romanism taught the artists of Holland to make figures that are physically unified within themselves, as well as to arrange them in unified, dynamic groupings. The time had now come for these artists to return to the central problem of Holland's national school: namely, how to relate figures to the free space between them.

Two more civic guard group portraits are traditionally attributed to Cornelis van der Voort, partly on the basis of entries in the old lists of the Rijksmuseum. That is surely not the case, however: one of them is much too antiquated, and the other too advanced, for the kind of artist we have come to know in this painting of 1618.

The So-Called Half Corporalship of Lieutenant Pieter Hasselaer

The first of these two works is the so-called half corporalship of Lieutenant Pieter Hasselaer of 1623 (fig. 38), no. 1586 [AHM no. A 9909] in the Rijksmuseum. The painting bears neither a signature nor a date. Twelve men occupy two rows separated by a partition, one row above the other, seven in one and five in the other: an age-old scheme that had, however, still suited Pietersz.'s purposes. All but three look out at the viewer, for the most part very blankly and uniformly, with no spark of the kind of interest in the moment that portrait heads were increasingly expected to have.

The pictorial conception is still basically the same as the one used by Pietersz., in which each of the figures presents himself individually to the viewer. A few of the figures, however, are looking off to the side at a very sharp angle. Obviously, the artist adopted an extremely reactionary approach to the tendency to unify the direction of the figures' gaze. This is confirmed by his insistence on including a number of archaic activities, such as musket-loading, as well as the type of pointing designed to call attention to the commanding officer. And in this case, the one man doing the pointing, from up in

the gallery, is not even looking in the direction in which the viewer would normally be expected to stand but off to the side at an angle. The artist of this painting was obviously someone who was simply not interested in developing a more precisely defined external coherence. He was satisfied with the traditional strategy of leaving each sitter to maintain his own timeless autonomy. As a result, this cannot be a work of 1623 by Cornelis van der Voort, the artist who five years earlier completed the portrait just discussed.

The composition of this unknown artist is as unimaginative as the conception, consisting as it does of a horizontal partition and three vertical lances that divide the entire picture surface into eight fields. In spite of all this, a number of signs point to the fact that this painting is more advanced than the work of Pietersz.: the figures here are calmer; the background is simpler; the partition is located more convincingly in space; and the figures are surrounded by a significant amount of free space.

The Civic Guard Group Portrait with the Forest of Lances, Rijksmuseum

Painting no. 1589 [AHM no. A 7258] in the Rijksmuseum, a group portrait of twenty-one men (fig. 39), is also decidedly not by Cornelis van der Voort because the portrait heads are much more advanced here than in van der Voort's work of 1618: their sculptural presence is greater, and their facial expressions more lifelike and fleeting.

The artist is possibly one of the greatest practitioners of individual portrait painting of the period, for even later it will be hard to find portrait heads that surpass in quality those of the captain and the lieutenant in this painting (they are the ones wearing the hats). In comparison to van der Voort's work, the portrait heads are in higher relief; in comparison to the work of later artists, they still have relatively firm, clear contours; and, finally, in comparison to Werner van den Valckert, the leading artist of the period, the rounded parts of their facial features are much softer. The artist has given the gazes of these figures a variety and intimacy that in themselves are enough to demonstrate how expert he was at capturing their individual likenesses as they present themselves to the viewer in a moment of time.

This still anonymous artist has also earned a place in the history of group portraiture. After Ketel, he was the first artist from Holland to realize that the only way to guarantee optimal external coherence in a civic guard group portrait was to make all the men even more subordinate to the captain. And so, it is the captain who, with a sweep of his right hand, now presents the troops to the viewer. Next in prominence is the lieutenant, then the standard-bearer somewhat in the background. Ketel had already tried out the idea of a presentation of the squad with a certain amount of subordination; however, his men are ignoring what their commander is doing. Compared to this, almost all the men in the present painting are looking out toward the viewer, and therefore to some extent following the captain's example. We will discuss the few exceptions to this shortly.

All the same, our unknown artist has not gone so far as to subordinate the

Fig. 39. Anonymous
Civic Guard Group Portrait around 1620
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

figures systematically among themselves. First of all, although all the men may be directing their attention at the same object, they still have the freedom to move in such a variety of ways that they are obviously all acting on their own volition and not simply on the captain's orders. Secondly, the artist added a few figures on the right-hand side, perhaps at the last minute, who do not fit in with the rest of the arrangement, and who seem to be rebelling on behalf of all the others against complete subordination. This group includes the secretary, located among the men in the gallery, who has joined the presentation with pencil and notebook instead of with a weapon. Next to him is a man who is looking not at the viewer but off on a diagonal to the side, while pointing back to the secretary. Below these two, the situation is reversed: the man second from the right raises his right hand in order to present himself of his own accord to the viewer, while his colleague in the corner, engrossed in the now familiar play of hands that marks him as the treasurer (figs. 32, 36), shows no interest in the viewer at all. It is no accident that the four guardsmen who do not conform to the subordinating scheme are all on the right side of the painting, for that puts them on the same side as the presiding captain, whom they, as coordinate elements, balance out to a certain extent.

The composition also has several important innovations to it. The artist apparently now felt that the use of two rows, one of which is elevated on a gallery, was the only way to arrange such a large group, of twenty-one figures, so that not just the heads but also the upper torsos are seen. At the same time, the resulting planar effect must have disturbed him, because he introduced a gap in the middle of the painting that runs from top to bottom and extends back into space. There we discover a view of buildings decorated with the kind of horizontal rooflines that had been introduced in the Romanist phase, which recedes back into space in a subjectively correct way, so that the closest ones loom up large, while the ones in the back grow smaller. This interval of space within the group portrait makes it possible for the artist to establish a relationship between the figures in the foreground and the free space off in the distance. To soften the contrast between the deep recession and the flat tiers of men to either side, however, the artist introduced three figures below — the standard-bearer, the drummer, and a third man between them — and the "forest of lances" above. The men presumably holding the lances are blocked from view except for a few enticing bits and pieces of physiognomy that challenge the viewer to imagine the rest of the figure. The viewer's gaze has more than enough room to break through the plane created by the lances and to travel back in space to the buildings behind and the sky above, which shades from light to dark.

The composition follows the same pattern as the pictorial conception. The artist relies on symmetry to set up a subordinating situation but then takes what should have been the dominant figure and puts him into a subsidiary position. The arrangement is surprisingly symmetrical, and yet the central figures are the very ones who have taken a step backward in the interval of space; as a result, they appear smaller than the others, and their size alone dis-

qualifies them from dominating the others. The captain appears to the right of the gap, cutting a powerful and imperious figure. His forceful features are surmounted by a hat that towers over the bare-headed men next to him. His pendant on the other side is the lieutenant, also wearing a hat and a figure of no less commanding presence and stature. The lieutenant seems to relate to his captain rather as an ancient Roman consul would have related to his fellow consul on a day when, as the law required, the latter assumed supreme military command.

Werner van den Valckert

Werner van den Valckert of Amsterdam has the distinction of being the first artist to solve the problem of fully unifying the external coherence of a group portrait in place and time. Art history has little to tell us about him. And yet he is surely one of the greatest artists of his day, not only because of the quality of the individual portrait heads, but also because of the splendid impression his group portraits make as a whole. Fortunately, he used his full signature on the paintings that concern us here. The Rijksmuseum also possesses a number of paintings showing scenes of orphanages that are definitely by his hand and that are best thought of as true historical genre paintings. Now, the fact that Valckert's group portraits are much more impressive than his orphanage scenes, where internal coherence is established by the historical context, is significant in itself, for it shows that the painters of Holland's second period were at their best when they could put portraits in their paintings, and therefore naturally draw the viewer directly into a relationship with the figures. Everything objective and historical constituted a mistaken path for them, a path on which they could never catch up to the Italians.

Valckert's earliest dated regent group portrait, of 1622, has not been exhibited at the Rijksmuseum in recent years, so I have never had a chance to see it. It would be interesting to know how much of the artist's later solution is already present in the earlier work. At any rate, we know that he had perfected his approach by 1624, because we have two of his regent group portraits from that year to prove it. They depict, respectively, the regents and the regentesses of the leper hospital.

The Regent Group Portrait of 1624 by Werner van den Valckert

The painting with the male regents (fig. 40) is no. 1461 [RM no. SK-C-417] in the Rijksmuseum. There are five figures: four of them, obviously the regents themselves, are visible down to knee level; they have hats on their heads and are seated around a table. The fifth person, standing with his hat in hand behind the chair of one of the regents, looks like a servant or an official of some kind and is usually taken for the hospital custodian.

All of the figures, with one exception, turn and look directly toward the viewer, thus concentrating their attention on a very small area, making it look as though Valckert were already thinking of the viewer in modern terms as a single, not a multiple, entity. Moreover, their attentiveness betrays the tension

Fig. 40. Werner van den Valckert
Regent Group Portrait of 1624
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Fig. 41. Werner van den Valckert
Company of Captain Albert Coenrat Burgh and Lieutenant Pieter Evertsz., 1625
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

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of the moment in a way that makes it immediately clear that the regents have been placed in a self-contained genre scene that is meant to include the viewer, that is, an unseen party who is to be imagined standing where the viewer is.

This is the pictorial conception familiar to us from Cornelis van der Voort's painting of 1618, where the regents in the painting are depicted awaiting the response of an unseen party to the question they have just posed. First of all, however, Valckert has omitted the two debaters and has oriented all activity exclusively toward the unseen applicant. Secondly, we no longer have a doubt about who is asking the question, namely, the elderly regent on the extreme left, apparently the chairman: with his mouth still half-open, he points with his left hand toward the open book in front of him, presumably his source for the comments he is making to the person standing before him. To make this figure's subordinating role clear, Valckert reverts to a time-honored device from the old civic guard group portraits by having the custodian behind the chairman point to his superior with his right hand.

The unseen applicant is expected to respond immediately, because the second officer is already reaching for a quill and a piece of paper in order to write down the appropriate instructions, while the third officer has placed his finger on the stack of coins from which the relief payment will be made. Finally, the fourth regent is listening intently, his quill already poised on the page where the appropriate entry will be promptly made. All of these activities, especially the last three, take place in a *single* moment of time, which the artist has been able to express with consummate skill and confidence.

At the same time, Valckert felt it necessary to reinforce the impression of the attentiveness of the moment already created by the figures' facial expressions by having the men perform various physical gestures at the same time. That is why two of them hold their heads at an angle, while the one on the right side points the index finger of his left hand as though asking the others to be quiet in order to hear the anticipated response better. The expressions on the men's faces would have been enough to communicate very clearly what the artist had in mind, and later artists, as we shall see, were to leave it at that. At that time, however, it was still thought necessary to express the psychological level of human experience in terms of obvious, concrete physical movements of the human body, especially the extremities.

Consequently, in 1624 Werner van den Valckert produced the first group portrait with seemingly perfect external coherence anchored in a specific place and time. Taken together with the unseen viewer, it represents a completely self-contained genre painting, at least at first glance. Therefore, the period that had begun in the 1580s and witnessed a transition in group portraiture from a symbolic approach to a genre treatment now reached a provisional conclusion in this work.

When we look more closely, however, we quickly realize that temporal coherence is not fully established. The idea behind the painting is that the regents are waiting for the response of the applicant; that is, after all, the basis for their relationship with the viewer in a specific place and time. In order for

them to be in the act of anticipating the answer, however, the question must already have been posed, but in the picture we see the asking of the question together with the expectation of the answer. As a result, two moments of time are actually depicted in the painting, however quickly the one may have followed the other.

Moreover, the three assisting regents subordinate themselves completely to the applicant, but not to the chairman who is speaking. The moment of time depicted would have been more completely unified had these three regents somehow been able to show that they, too, were listening to the chairman. That would have placed them in a subordinate relationship to him, however, and therefore into a situation of self-contained internal coherence, which Valckert, at this stage in the evolution, was still at pains to avoid.

We can see from this discussion the point in the overall evolution of group portraiture that had been reached by 1624, what remained to be done, and why Valckert was not the one do it. Valckert discovered the solution for the main problem of group portraiture that had challenged the artists of the second period, namely, situating external coherence in a specific place and time. In the end, though, perfect temporal unity was not possible without depicting perfect internal coherence in the figures' psychological expressions and the corresponding physical actions. Therefore, developing perfect internal coherence as a prerequisite for perfect external coherence in space and time would now constitute the main problem for the third period. Romance artists had long since solved this problem, and the solution was simply there for the taking in their painting. The challenge in Holland, however, was to find a way of delicately balancing it with their own emphasis on external coherence, by making the scene within the painting, though self-contained in its own internal coherence, nevertheless seem like a product of the subjective experience of the viewer.

Compositionally, the table projecting into the foreground at a slight angle is very effective in establishing a spatial center; correspondingly, the relatively horizontal alignment of the heads succeeds in integrating the figures within a plane. This alignment drops down on the right-hand side, suggesting a triangular shape that ties the composition together. The heads have more sculptural presence than we have ever seen before; they project toward the viewer with firm, almost tactile surfaces. At the same time, the figures' contours have become noticeably more relaxed, so that the psychological level as expressed by their attentiveness—which in this instance is somewhat insistent and pronounced—has no trouble competing with their tangible, physical aspects.

The same love of tangible surfaces projecting out of the picture plane that we observed in the figure composition is also apparent in the treatment of the architecture in the background. Here we find obliquely projecting corners and pilasters, as well as the kind of decorative reliefs that would soon lose favor in the subsequent phase of painting in Holland, when emphasis shifted to more generalized visual effects seen from a distance. The reliefs have subjects that allude to the activities of the regents, such as Lazarus with the dogs, Lazarus

in heaven, and — to the extent that they are visible at all — other similar works of charity. The regents stand out from the background because of the contour modeling, and they are therefore effectively positioned in the surrounding space. The ball on the chairback behind the treasurer is completely flattened out against the light areas of the relief in the background. Dark areas with indefinite boundaries are beginning to accumulate in the corners between the projecting piers; we can already consider them genuine examples of chiaroscuro, or spatial darkness. Therefore, Werner van den Valckert is the first artist in the evolution we have been tracing who tried, however hesitantly, to represent the free space circulating around solids with the unbounded spatial shadows of chiaroscuro.

The painting of the four regentesses of the leper hospital, no. 1462 [RM no. SK-C-419] in the Rijksmuseum, has exactly the same basic pictorial conception and composition. This time, however, the hospital custodian is looking out of the painting somewhat aslant, thus proving that it would be a mistake to assume that the viewer is already consistently understood as a single person. The "applicant" therefore is always potentially several individuals, even where the regents look as though they might be dealing with only one person at the moment depicted. The background has greater depth this time and even more effective contrasts of light and dark in the free spaces.

The Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1625 by Werner van den Valckert

What was relatively easy to do in a regent group portrait would necessarily be much more difficult in a civic guard group portrait, with its much larger number of figures. What could an artist do to subordinate so many men to the viewer in a *single* moment of time and still make it look convincing? Building on his successful effort of the previous year to focus external coherence, Werner van den Valckert went to work on this next problem in his painting of the company of Captain Albert Coenrat Burgh and Lieutenant Pieter Evertsz. Hulft, no. 1459 [AHM no. A 7420] in the Rijksmuseum, dated 1625 (fig. 41).

Again, the solution came in the form of subordinating the men visible in the painting to the captain, who is sitting slightly to left of center across from his counterpart, the lieutenant, the only other seated figure. Otherwise, all the rest of the men are standing. The captain is easy to spot because his three neighbors to the left are all pointing him out for the viewer. We find him presenting troops as we have seen before, but this time the activity involves more than a generalized flick of the wrist: Captain Burgh is specifically gesticulating toward a piece of paper that a bowing guardsman is ceremoniously extending toward him. Clearly, this piece of paper, which I have never had the opportunity to read, holds the key to exactly what is going on in the scene. What look like drawings of fortresses are lying on the table, and since the captain is holding a pair of compasses in his right hand, it may be that he is showing the viewer a fortification that the company has just been charged with defending (the war with Spain was raging on again in full force) or the evidence of one of its military exploits.

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With the exception of the one bowing figure turned toward the captain and looking in his direction, all the rest of the men are focusing their eyes attentively on the viewer, who is the exclusive object of their momentary, concentrated interest, and whose attention they are trying to attract by their own actions. Valckert's main difficulty lay in devising actions that were, on the one hand, analogous to the natural division of labor practiced by the regents and, on the other, capable of interrelating the guardsmen in the company. That is why we still find him reverting to archaic motifs like touching hands or pointing toward a book. Valckert clearly understood, however, that until he could create a consistent and convincing internal coherence, he had no chance of developing a perfectly resolved external coherence anchored in space and time. He also realized that simply unifying the figures into a genre scene and thereby subordinating them to the viewer would not solve the problem either. This explains why he developed the new idea of having the men parade in ordered ranks as though in response to an official command. This proved to be a very effective means of establishing internal coherence in a civic guard group portrait, a goal that later artists, as we shall see, consciously pursued.

Otherwise, the pictorial conception of this civic guard group portrait is still essentially the same as the one he used for his regent group portrait of 1624. The captain is subordinating himself not directly to the other men but to the viewer (whose interest he awakens). The viewer, in turn, subordinates the whole company. On the one hand, the guardsmen are curious about the viewer's reaction, but, on the other, their own actions effectively subordinate any outside observer.

The most important innovations in Valckert's pictorial conception for this civic guard group portrait include, first of all, the use of a specific, concrete object, namely, the piece of paper, to fix the attention of the viewer simultaneously in space and time, and secondly, the mutual interaction between two of the figures in the painting, namely, the captain and the man who presents the paper. It is significant in this context that the bowing man, unlike comparable figures in earlier Amsterdam group portraits, does not look at the viewer or anywhere else but at the captain to whom he makes his bow and his presentation. The captain, for his part, is acknowledging the bowing man's presence with a gesture of his left hand. This was the first time that an artist of Amsterdam finally managed to overcome the local inhibition about exploiting subordination in order to create self-contained groups of figures with the freedom to interact among themselves in the manner of genre painting. In 1618 Cornelis van der Voort had taken a timid step in this direction, though he retained the device of coordination. Another thing that Valckert's treatment of the relationship between the captain and the bowing man reveals is how his thinking, in principle, was beginning to approach that of his colleagues in Haarlem. For all that, Valckert still felt compelled to make the captain look up and establish contact with the viewer, as though he had to do something to compensate for having taken the unprecedented liberty of depicting a reciprocal relationship within the painting.

The attentiveness expressed in these portraits is of the same fine quality that we observed in his regent group portrait. The heads of the three men marching in on the right, and that of the man to the left of the standard-bearer, are simply unforgettable to anyone who has ever seen the painting.

The modeling of the surfaces of the men's faces has become even firmer than what we observed in the earlier work. This time, however, there are two spatial centers rather than one: the small table on the left, plus the space created by the bowing man to the right. Then, in order to contain the flow of space within the composition, Valckert has aligned the figures' heads along a horizontal, thereby pressing them more into a plane. A similar flattening effect results from the central position of the standard-bearer and the way he divides the group into two halves.

A completely new idea that originates with Valckert is the row of three guardsmen on the right-hand side who diminish in height with recession, in accordance with subjective experience. Even Ketel still had each man taller than the one in front, in an arrangement possible only if the viewer were to adopt an unwonted bird's-eye view. Valckert stopped stacking figures on top of each other in the style of antiquity and instead, following the Italians, accurately situated one figure behind the other in a way that is subjectively convincing to normal visual experience from the point of view of a person of average height. The background of the painting is badly obscured by dirt and shows a dark corner of a room with a flat-fronted fireplace that harmonizes well with the calm figure composition.

The Regent Group Portrait of 1628 by Nicolaes Eliasz.

Valckert's influence, especially that of his regent group portrait of 1624, can be assessed by noting that we can still trace its effects in the most mature example from the third period, namely, Rembrandt's *Staalmeesters*. In fact, we will see that the only thing Rembrandt really did was to take Valckert's solution and perfect the internal coherence. Valckert's work also had an enormous effect in his own day, as we can see by analyzing a painting by Nicolaes Eliasz., one of the most popular portrait painters of the period in Amsterdam: a portrait of the regents of the *spinhuis* (prison), no. 335 [AHM no. A 7310] in the Rijksmuseum, that was painted four years later (fig. 42). Signed and dated 1628, the arrangement of four men and a servant essentially repeats Valckert's solution. Here, too, the regents are waiting for the applicant to say something; this time, however, the custodian's pointing gesture, along with its undesirable tinge of symbolism, is eliminated, for the gesture of the chairman himself allows us to identify him with absolute certainty. Meanwhile, next to him, the treasurer is getting ready to make a payment, while the two secretaries prepare to do the bookkeeping.

Wherever Eliasz. departs from Valckert's solution, the result is always to weaken the subordination or to calm down the physical movement. For example, the group's subordinate relationship to the viewer is countered by the fact that the custodian who brings in the note completely ignores the

Fig. 42. Nicolaes Eliasz.
Regent Group Portrait of 1628
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

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viewer. This action could easily have happened at some other time, though it does not openly conflict with the rest of the activities. The treasurer, who has taken up direct contact with the viewer on his own, as indicated by the way he is pointing with his outstretched left hand, competes with the subordination naturally imposed by the chairman. Eliasz. has also noticeably reduced the number of obvious physical movements that Valckert had included to reinforce the idea that his figures are engaged in momentary activities, such as tilting their heads in a lively way or having them gesture hastily with their hands. One need only compare the secretary on the right with his predecessor in Valckert's painting. In the earlier work, the figure seems to be requesting silence by raising a finger, as though personally absorbed and momentarily interested in the gesture. In the later work, however, his counterpart leans back in a chair in cool reserve with the kind of lofty detachment we associate with the figures of Antonie van Dyck. The relationship with the viewer has become less physically energetic and therefore deeper.

The changes in the composition are analogous. The table no longer functions as a conspicuous spatial center: the secretary in Valckert's portrait is still seated in front on the long side of the table; his successor in Eliasz.'s painting has moved to the end. From the viewer's standpoint, the whole scene is pushed farther back in space, and it loses some of the arresting immediacy of the earlier work. This goes together with the softer modeling, the strong shadows under the brims of the hats, the greater interest in chiaroscuro in general, as well as with the setting of the scene in the corner of a room with a lambrequin and a painting on the wall that looks like a work by one of the society painters of the time, such as Dirck Hals or Pieter Codde.

The faces, however, have lost some of their individuality as portraits. The expression around the eyes in particular is standardized and stereotyped to a degree never before seen in the portraiture of Holland. This is surely tied to Eliasz.'s desire to give his figures a look of distinction — in comparison to them, Valckert's regents are mere plebeians: simple, sturdy, and yet true to life — for the ambition to achieve a greater degree of refinement always goes hand in hand with a self-centered attitude that isolates one individual from the others. Whenever this tendency is found in Hollandish painting, it has a disruptive effect. Eliasz.'s painting is one of the earliest examples of its kind, and yet it already gives us insight into how the desire for more elegant and refined figures also eventually led to the destruction of what is best in the art of Holland, namely, its portrait quality.

Most of Nicolaes Eliasz.'s career falls during the third period of the group portraiture in Holland. In spite of the popularity his paintings enjoyed, especially the portraits of individuals, he did not break new ground. His civic guard group portrait of the company of Captain Jacob Backer, no. 332 [RM no. SK-C-386] in the Rijksmuseum, dates from the beginning of the 1630s. Just as Eliasz. based his painting on Valckert, so for the second group portrait attributed to him he relied on works by the Frans Hals we know from two civic guard group portraits dating from 1627. Eliasz. translates Hals's

arrangement into the Amsterdam manner, meaning that there is no trace of interaction among the figures. The guardsmen are engaged in animated conversation, but the interlocutor remains out of sight outside the picture. Eliasz., of course, cannot compete with Hals in capturing with confidence and verve the immediacy of the movements. In addition, the Rijksmuseum has a whole series of his large group portraits in storage, none of which I have been able to see. However, because Eliasz. was obviously so totally dependent on other artists in his early work, it is very unlikely that his later career was much different, and therefore equally unlikely that he had any significant effect on the subsequent evolution.

The Third Period of Group Portraiture in Holland, 1624–1662

Thomas de Keyser

Thomas de Keyser was the first artist in Amsterdam who, following the gradual efforts of his predecessors Cornelis van der Voort and Werner van den Valckert, boldly began to introduce internal coherence by means of mutual interaction among the figures in his group portraits. By an interesting coincidence, the same Dr. Sebastian Egbertsz. Vrij who commissioned Aert Pietersz. to paint the first anatomy lesson produced in Amsterdam is also the chief character in de Keyser's earliest group portrait. Although the work is unsigned and undated, the records in the Rijksmuseum assign it to 1619. This anatomy lesson (fig. 43) involves only six people and more closely resembles a regent group portrait, so that, because of the small number of figures, the solution to the problem that de Keyser posed came much more easily.

The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Sebastian Egbertsz. Vrij of 1619

To appreciate what is new in the pictorial conception, it is necessary to renew acquaintance with Pietersz.'s version (fig. 31). Pietersz., we recall, succeeded in establishing strict external coherence (with the viewer); however, with the exception of some pointing, there is no attempt to establish internal coherence among the figures: even the professor is not permitted to look at the cadaver that he is explicating to his audience. De Keyser's professor, on the other hand, is directly referring to the skeleton that now absorbs his entire attention. Not only that, but the other three standing men in the group are looking and listening to his lecture. Thus, four figures in the picture have internal coherence with each other, namely, by subordinating three of them to a fourth, the professor.

In contrast to this group of four standing figures, the two physicians seated in the foreground are directing their attention toward the viewer, and one of them, on the right, is gesturing with a raised right hand toward the skeleton, the object of the professor's lecture. These two figures thus establish external coherence between at least some of the people in the painting and the viewer; and since one of them also points to the group that has been unified internally, it also builds a bridge between that group and the viewer.

The difference between de Keyser's pictorial conception and Pietersz.'s is obvious: the earlier work concentrates exclusively on external coherence, while the later work sets the groundwork for internal coherence among at

Fig. 43. Thomas de Keyser
The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Sebastian Egbertsz. Vrij, 1619
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

least a few of the figures. This is the Haarlem approach in the stage represented by Hals's first civic guard group portrait, painted three years earlier. As an artist from Amsterdam, however, de Keyser suppressed the joie de vivre characteristic of Hals, because he was more concerned about keeping the attentiveness of his figures as pure as possible. De Keyser's professor does manage to subordinate some of his listeners and, moreover, to a degree that would not be possible in Haarlem for several decades. Still, his status is somewhat neutralized by the fact that de Keyser makes no effort to distinguish him in any other way. Quite the contrary, the professor fits into the ranks of his colleagues: his head is kept even smaller than the others' by way of compensation for the fact that he is the only one wearing a hat. Typical of de Keyser, even at this early stage of his evolution, is the tendency to give his figures lively expressions; in this respect, his later work sometimes rivals even Rubens.

The same strong tendency to use subordination to establish unity can be seen in the composition, which, for the first time in the history of group portraiture, is based on the idea of a central triangle. The skeleton creates a strict central axis in the exact middle of the painting, which emphatically subordinates the groups of three figures to either side. It is, of course, characteristic of this artist from Holland that he chooses a lifeless object, namely, the skeleton, for this dominant role, rather than one of the sitters, much less the professor. Furthermore, the sides of the triangle do not descend at equal rates from the apex, which results in a rather abrupt transition from the center to the sides. This choice is a holdover from the early Hollandish (Gothic) practice of lining figures up vertically and separately, while avoiding any kind of diagonal connection between them (such as would have existed in classical and Italian Renaissance art).

The background is kept completely dark: de Keyser apparently did not want to run the risk of having any substantial objects in the surroundings compete with the figures. Nevertheless, certain areas—such as the shadows associated with the brim of the professor's hat, with the physiognomy of the man seated on the left, and with the raised right hand of the man seated on the right— betray him as an artist who, in spite of the relatively firm way he modeled surfaces, was, in fact, already beginning to think in terms of the interaction between figures and surrounding free space.

It was inevitable, of course, that Amsterdam would not find the Haarlem approach of 1616 satisfactory for long. For the artists in Amsterdam, it was not enough for internal and external coherence to be merely represented and then superficially connected: they wanted them to coincide so perfectly that internal coherence would simply be the direct expression of external coherence. De Keyser attempted to do just this in his large signed and dated civic guard group portraits of 1632 and 1633.

The Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1632 by Thomas de Keyser

The earlier of the two paintings, no. 767 [RM no. SK-C-381] in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 44), shows the company of Captain Allaert Cloeck and Lieutenant Lucas Jacobsz. Rotgans as full-length figures. De Keyser's characteristic tendency to utilize subordination accounts for the way the officers are arranged in a small group of their own exactly in the middle of the foreground: the captain is on the left, extending his right hand toward the viewer; the lieutenant on the right; and the standard-bearer between them. The artist also arranged the rest of the men as symmetrically as possible: seven on one side, six on the other. Two of the left-hand group and one on the right are mounting the steps that lead up to the platform on which the officers are standing. This action not only provides a smooth transition to the figures in the background, but also creates the impression that everything is taking place in one *single* moment. Behind the transitional figures ascending the steps are two regular rows on either side, one with two figures and one with three, arranged as though the back row were raised a few steps higher than the one in front. With only one fairly inconspicuous exception in the right-hand corner, all the figures are turned frontally, with their gaze riveted on the viewer. Quite in contrast to his anatomy lesson of 1619, de Keyser seems to have completely abandoned the idea of direct mutual interaction among the figures.

So, what we have then is another version of the theme of presentation by the captain which was introduced into group portraiture in Amsterdam by Cornelis Ketel. What is new about de Keyser's version is that now all the men, with no exception, are shown reacting to the captain's command. To make this clear, the artist had to show his portrait subjects as full-length figures, that is, including their legs. Consequently, the attentive gazes of the men establish contact with the viewer, at the same time that the idea of the regular, military marching activity puts them into a subordinate relationship with the captain. The eye contact is the basis of the external coherence, while the marching is what establishes the internal coherence. Furthermore, each of the men is fully involved in both aspects, not just half participating in each of them (as in Frans Grebber). Add to this an imaginary viewer outside the picture space who is reviewing the troops, and the external coherence appears complete. Even without such a viewer, however, the figures still seem convincingly engaged in a coherent activity: de Keyser was so consistent about the activity of marching that the action can stand on its own.

This increase in physical activity is naturally countered in the Hollandish manner by placing more emphasis on the figures' individualized gazes, which now, more than ever before, demand our attention and spark our interest — the gaze being, after all, where we expect to find out something about the inner, spiritual workings of a person. That is why the viewer feels immediately drawn to the area around the figures' eyes, even though de Keyser depicted the men down to the soles of their feet, varied their clothing, and made local color relatively autonomous (the greenish-gray tones and growing presence of chiaroscuro notwithstanding). Personality is, as it were, translated into atten-

tiveness, which de Keyser, like Valckert, interprets in comparatively active, Rubensian terms, involving more individual will. The look on the face of the standard-bearer as he gazes out toward the viewer is unforgettable. This unbalanced effort to animate the sitters' features has its pitfalls, however, which de Keyser did not always successfully avoid: it runs the risk of making all the figures seem alike, thus stereotyping both their psychological expression and their physical gestures.

The composition, compared to that of his painting of 1619, is even more centralized and symmetrical; the heads create regular, rhythmic patterns. The background drops back noticeably on either side of the central group — an illusion that is effectively aided by the stairs in the foreground. The viewer, however, is still not particularly conscious of the free spaces in each of the lower corners: what registers first is the physical presence of the guardsmen who form a dense mass that takes up space, projecting into the foreground like a wedge. Again, the background is neutral and undifferentiated.

The contour modeling has become even stronger, while the space between the figures is already beginning to fill with the spatial shadow that Rembrandt would soon be using to occupy the leftover spaces in his paintings. De Keyser also tempered the vertical axes of the figures, which might have overstressed the marching idea, by allowing the figures to twist and turn slightly and permitting the lances to lean and create diagonals, so that the axes of the figures to left and right seem to balance fairly exactly.

We are extremely fortunate to have an earlier sketch of the present work in the Albertina in Vienna (fig. 45). It is a pen-and-ink drawing with a light wash and an imposed grid that clearly marks it as the preparatory stage of a painting. The arrangement of the middle group is identical, leaving no doubt that the drawing and the painting once belonged to one and the same project.[37] Nevertheless, there are enough differences between them to justify the conclusion that the drawing represents an earlier stage[38] not only of the painting, but of de Keyser's artistic thinking in general. The comparison, therefore, is extremely illuminating, because we are able to see what the artist originally intended and subsequently decided to change.

The area of greatest similarity between drawing and painting lies in the central group of officers, together with the neighboring figures climbing the stairs. Even here, however, there is evidence of a change in conception: the heads of the figures in the drawing are twisting and turning, their hats are set at more jaunty angles, the captain is gesticulating in a much more emphatic way, and — most importantly of all — it is the captain and the lieutenant alone who look out at the viewer. In this respect, the conception of the drawing is closer to Hals, whose influence on de Keyser's anatomy lesson of 1619 we have already noted, than is that of the painting.

The discrepancies are most obvious toward the corners, where the conception of the drawing differs fundamentally from that of the painting. First of all, the figures are not marching in rows but are placed in a loosely symmetrical arrangement; the alignment of the heads slopes down gently on both sides.

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Fig. 44. Thomas de Keyser
Company of Captain Allaert Cloeck and Lieutenant Lucas Jacobsz. Rotgans, 1632
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum
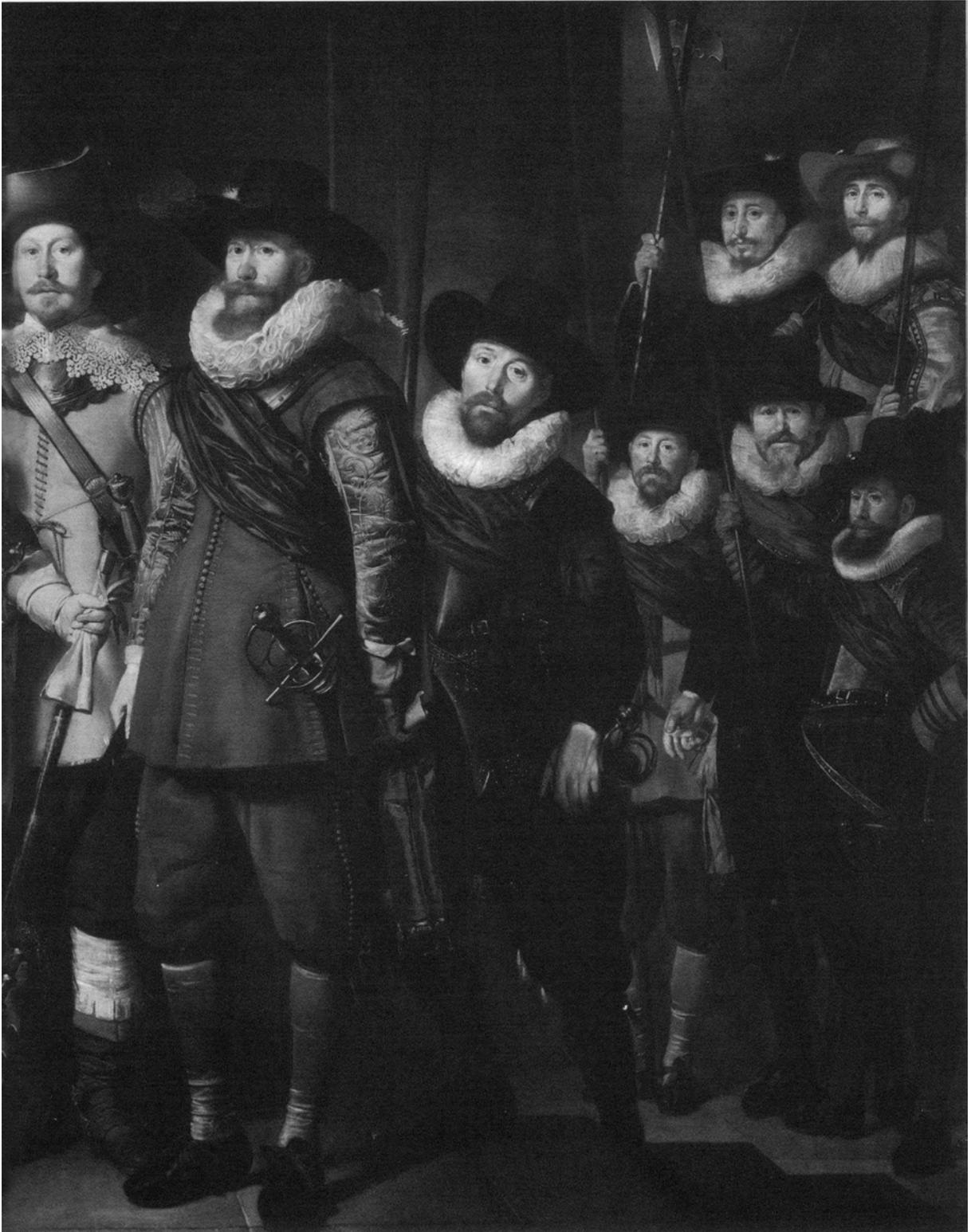
Fig. 45. Thomas de Keyser
Sketch for his *Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1632*
Pen-and-ink drawing with wash
Vienna, Albertina

Secondly, with few exceptions, the men are not looking out at the viewer but interacting with each other within little subgroups. This results in the lively confusion that is characteristic of the Haarlem approach.

Originally, the thinking behind this group portrait must have gone something like this: following the model of his colleagues in Haarlem, de Keyser decided to let the men in the background to the left and right of the central group establish internal coherence, but only within small, isolated genre groups. Then, to set up a more tightly knit connection between the internal and external coherence, he included the figures hastening up the steps. Finally, the foreground figures—the captain making the presentation and the lieutenant—effectively complete the connection between the activities in the painting and the viewer. De Keyser's pictorial conception in the drawing is still very close to the one he used for the painting of 1619. The fact that the artist broke the men in the drawing into small, unconnected groups instead of engaging all of them in a unified activity (like the demonstration with the skeleton) is partly a reflection of the greater inherent difficulty involved in applying subordination convincingly to a group of thirteen individuals as opposed to four.

De Keyser, however, went on to reject the conception associated with the Haarlem manner of Hals, and this is characteristic of the artistic volition of Amsterdam, which would naturally favor a more defined and developed external coherence. Of course, in keeping with the highly developed artistic needs of the period, this internal coherence had to be accompanied by convincing internal coherence as well; and this was present, as we have seen. Nevertheless, internal coherence took precedence and began to overpower the viewer.

Ten years later Rembrandt adopted the idea of men marching in rows at the order of their commander as a means of integrating the figures in *The Night Watch*, and this endows de Keyser's early version with considerable art-historical importance.[39] Another characteristic of de Keyser's here that puts him in line with Rembrandt is that he minimized the size, importance, and personality of the subsidiary figures relative to the main figures in a way unprecedented in Amsterdam. This was, of course, nothing more than the natural result of his rigorous application of subordination. Rembrandt was even more systematic in this respect, and we will be able to observe how his disregard for the lower-ranking men in his paintings drives his group portraits to the limits of what is permissible in portraiture and even beyond.

The Civic Guard Group Portrait of 1633 by Thomas de Keyser

Even Thomas de Keyser seems not to have had the best experiences with this sudden increase in subordination for, only one year later, in a group portrait produced in his workshop, he seems intent on coordinating the physical appearance of all the figures. The painting depicts twenty-one members of the company of Captain Jacob Symonsz. de Vries and Lieutenant Dirck Graeff, dates from 1633, and is numbered 768 [AHM no. A 7354] in the

Rijksmuseum (fig. 46). Stylistically, it is perhaps the best example ever of Holland's national style: physical activity, at least of the sort intended to represent connections among the figures, is completely suppressed, and all signs of life are expressed through the figures' gazes, which are directed out toward the viewer.

The men have apparently assembled to be on view, since all of them, without exception, are looking out at the viewer. They are therefore aware that unseen spectators are scrutinizing them at this very moment. This time, however, even the captain has shied away from presenting the troops or making a welcoming sign, and we get no impression that the men have just marched in. On the contrary, twenty-one pairs of eyes have fixed their sometimes piercing glares intently in the direction of possible viewers, and where — as in the case of the standard-bearer — this piercing quality is somewhat tempered, the result is a face without peer in the history of painting.

External coherence is now situated specifically in time and space. The minimal variation in the direction of the gazes allows us to assume a relatively limited spectator location, if not a single spectator. Furthermore, for the first time in de Keyser's work, a view into the distant background enhances the illusion of a subjectively perceived, convincing space. All the participants share in a single action (that of looking at the viewer), creating the impression of a unified moment of time. Finally, the fact that this action is associated exclusively with the eyes (the mirror of the soul) — that is to say, taken as far as possible out of the realm of the physically objective and shifted to that of the spiritually subjective — also has the effect of enhancing the external coherence, because the eyes appeal to subjective experience far more than do other parts of the human body.

All of this pointed emphasis on setting up external coherence is, however, only by way of compensation for the lack of convincing internal coherence. Looking at the painting, we gather a fairly definite impression that the company has assembled for review in front of an audience; however, we are not utterly convinced of it, as we were by the men marching in rows in obvious response to the command of the captain in the painting of 1632. We recognize the captain here only through the superficial fact that he is the one prominently and self-importantly seated in an armchair in the exact middle of the painting. But nothing indicates that the men assembled to his left and right are responding as subordinates in any way to his orders. On the contrary, much like Aert Pietersz.'s sitters, it looks as though each of them has shown up of his own accord to present himself to the audience. As a consequence of the active interaction of the figures portrayed in earlier paintings now having been reduced to eye movements (even if the painter may still have intended the latter as purely psychological interaction), the modern viewer who does not examine the painting more closely will merely note a fatal similarity to modern group photography, which is intended to serve mnemonic rather than artistic ends. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to spend time with this work, going through it one gaze and one face at a time; only then does

de Keyser's portrait reveal itself as one of the most mature and (particularly because of the relative lack of internal coherence) most typical works of art from Holland.

A comparison between this group portrait of 1633 and the earliest group portrait, Dirk Jacobsz.'s painting of 1529, shows some remarkable similarities, especially in the regular way in which the individual heads are turned toward the viewer, that is to say, in the need to establish external coherence that was so evident in early Hollandish art. The changes that had taken place in the century separating the two works are nonetheless also apparent. The earlier figures take an active role in subordinating the viewer to themselves through hand movements, pointing, self-presentation, and so on. But all of these physical gestures are brought to rest in the later work, so that the figures are free to engage the attention of the viewer by means of their individualized gazes alone, which speak directly to the soul.

As far as the evolution of internal coherence is concerned, however, de Keyser's painting of 1633 clearly represents a reaction against his earlier works, especially the bold solution of 1632. In the earlier painting, de Keyser had already given up the idea of mutual interactions among the men; in the later work, he also abandoned the subordinating motif of men carrying out the orders of their commanding officer. What we learn from this is, first of all, how sensitive Amsterdam continued to be in regard to subordination; secondly, that Thomas de Keyser, for all his many admirable qualities, was simply not prepared to ignore the fickle demands of his patrons in order to work out a solution to the problem of group portraiture that preoccupied the artists of his day.

For the first time in our consideration of de Keyser's work, his composition warrants closer attention. The figures are divided into three groups, as we have already seen in Pieter Isaacsz. In Isaacsz.'s painting, however, the divisions are marked by individuals who function like pilasters charged with articulating the wall of figures. Instead, de Keyser introduces two gaps; as a result, the subdivisions are no longer marked by solid bodies, as they are in Isaacsz., but by open spaces—a change in keeping with the restful pictorial conception and its lack of action. Strict symmetry is observed among the three groups: the lateral subdivisions are subordinate to the central one, within which the captain dominates the other members of his unit and therefore indirectly the rest of the company.

As mentioned earlier, this is the first instance in which de Keyser has taken the trouble to define the background with any precision.[40] What we find is a palace facade separated from the foreground row of figures by a generous dark space and consisting of a gable doorway flanked by the lower parts of two giant engaged columns. Through the portal, we see clearly the oblique ceiling beams of a more brightly lit room where two men are conversing at a table. This detail, in spite of the cramped view, is highly atmospheric because of the way the illumination makes the little back room look spatially coherent. The two figures in their broad-brimmed hats seem calmly attentive to each other's company; the chiaroscuro associated with the men and with the

Fig. 46. Thomas de Keyser
*Company of Captain Jacob Symonsz. de Vries and Lieutenant
Dirck Graeff, 1633*
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Fig. 47. Thomas de Keyser
*The Four Burgomasters of Amsterdam Receive the Message
of the Arrival of Queen Dowager Marie de Médicis, 1638*
The Hague, Mauritshuis

space between them succeeds in creating a certain mood. The same passive attentiveness that winds its way back and forth between the twenty-one men in the foreground and the viewer continues into the interior space behind the men, causing everything in the painting—the solid figures and the intangible free spaces between them—to coalesce into one subjective whole.

The Burgomasters of Amsterdam in 1638 by Thomas de Keyser

In 1638 Thomas de Keyser received the commission to portray the four burgomasters of Amsterdam as they received word of the arrival of Marie de Médicis in their city. The work (fig. 47) has the format of a cabinet painting, and it is now one of the jewels of the Mauritshuis in The Hague. It is clear from the format alone that the artist (and no doubt the patron as well) was not aiming for a group portrait but for a genuine history painting—which, of course, the Hollandish mind immediately translated into a genre scene.

Four burgomasters in their cloaks, their broad-brimmed hats pulled well down on their heads, sit around a rectangular table, while an officer, who has just entered on the right-hand side, respectfully delivers the message. Were it not for the presence of the messenger, the whole painting, at least in its pictorial conception, would certainly pass for a group portrait.

The burgomaster closest to the officer is only barely turning his head in the newcomer's direction, as though his message were a matter of total indifference. He has also stretched out and crossed his legs in front of him in a way that seems to imply that he has no immediate intention of getting up. His neighbor behind the table is gazing passively into the blue at an angle, while a third man, seen in complete profile, also looks unlikely to rise. Finally, the fourth burgomaster seated on the left-hand side of the end of the table has just finished speaking, as indicated by the rhetorical gesture of his left hand; he leaves his hand in this position, which suggests that he intends to continue speaking as soon as the interruption caused by the arrival of the officer is over. And this is called history painting! No sign whatsoever of an expression of will or emotion that one would expect to accompany an announcement of this kind! No trace of the joy or excitement, of the pride or resoluteness that any Italian or Flemish artist would have included as the natural reaction to the news. The only thing contained in the facial expressions of these three sitters is pure, passive attentiveness. These cold-blooded Hollanders seem incapable of any form of action. And were we not informed from other sources that, as a matter of fact, the citizens of Amsterdam had been excitedly anticipating this event and planning a splendid reception for the French queen mother for quite a long time, we could almost be led to believe that the burgomasters commissioned the painting with the express purpose of documenting their total indifference to the visit of this regal lady and mother of Louis XIII.

The most important thing to note, however, is that the moment we take away the message-bearing officer and imagine him as an invisible presence in the spectator's space, the conception of the painting would be that of a group portrait. And, in fact, we find regent group portraits painted only a few years

later that essentially reproduce this work by de Keyser, some of which in fact contain a lot more activity, even though they are pure portraits with no intention of documenting events of historical significance.

Because the painting of the four burgomasters of Amsterdam was not commissioned as a group portrait, de Keyser did not need to be careful about establishing external coherence, at least not the kind where the figures look directly out of the painting at the viewer. On the other hand, the commission did require him to establish internal coherence. Our general impression, however, is quite the opposite: not much would be needed to establish external coherence, but internal coherence is practically nonexistent, since we are not given any clue as to the motivations behind the figures' actions, at least not the kind of clue familiar from classical Italian and Flemish works.

Therefore, the turnabout in de Keyser's thinking in 1633 had a lasting effect and lent qualities to his work that were to make them more typical of Holland as a whole. An Italian would have found no internal coherence at all: he would never have been able to comprehend how four burgomasters could behave as these do, given the fact that they are supposed to be receiving such extraordinary news. As a result, this painting offers a profound look at the essence of painting in Holland that very few other paintings could give. It reconfirms, first of all, the overriding importance of external coherence for the painting of Holland, not only in group portraiture but also in general, and it shows us once again how the basically portrait-oriented pictorial conception in Holland turns all historical action from a reciprocal transaction between third parties into a subjective act of contemplation, attentiveness, and a mirroring of the viewer.

The one aspect of de Keyser's that is emphasized much more than would normally be appropriate to a portrait is the way the figures are balanced and connected with the surrounding space: in other words, the very aspect that most appeals to the eyes of modern art lovers. Contours begin to disappear into the grayish atmosphere that hovers in front of the back wall. The modeled shapes, while well defined, emerge as soft and spongy forms out of the ebb and flow of the misty chiaroscuro of the intervening free space, so that the figures seem like little more than compact condensations of modeled light. Bodies are stripped of their substance, their tangible and physical qualities; haptic forms melt into the purely visual experience of the free space around them. The local color that always clings to the haptic is broken up by highlights and shadows into imperceptible modulations of varying shades. This dematerialization of form combines with the figures' passivity and aversion to action to produce the distinctive, if indefinable, mood that emanates from this and comparable paintings by Holland's major artists. Yet, it is undeniable that consequently the figures portrayed give up more of their objective individuality in favor of the subjective impression of an image as a whole and the surrounding free space than would have been compatible with the idea of portraiture. Obviously, if subjectivity increases beyond a certain level, portraiture is no longer possible.

The composition of the painting is based on a spatial composition with the table at its center. It is characteristic of de Keyser, as it is for all artists in Holland who sought to portray pure attentiveness, that his spatial composition is paralleled as much as possible by a tranquil composition within a plane. Rembrandt did the same late in his career, and that is why I would like to postpone the discussion of this point until we get to those works. The four burgomasters in de Keyser's painting of 1638 are roughly equidistant from each other; their heads line up along a very shallow zigzag pattern that gradually rises toward the right.

Rembrandt

When Rembrandt was a young man, he left Leiden, the city of his birth, for a short time to complete his art training in the studios of famous, established artists in Holland. He did not, however, set out for Haarlem where Hals, the artist whom we normally consider the pioneer of a strongly national art in the Holland of the 1620s, was active. Instead, this precocious youth journeyed to Amsterdam. And here again, it was not the portrait painters most typical of Holland, such as Werner van den Valckert or Thomas de Keyser, whom Rembrandt sought out but Pieter Lastman, who had been to Italy. This is the best justification for the seemingly paradoxical assertion that, more than all of his contemporary countrymen, Rembrandt was truly an Italianist. And the most important of the numerous aspects of his work that reflect Italian influence is undoubtedly, from the beginning of his career, his resolute espousal of subordination as one of his principal means of artistic expression.

Nevertheless, Rembrandt's ultimate goal was to attain a perfectly resolved external coherence with the viewer, which, as we have seen, is the indispensable raison d'être of all group portrait painting. He must have realized early on in his career that complete and well-defined external coherence — meaning the connection between the viewer and the figures depicted in the painting — depends on an already resolved internal coherence — meaning a subordinate relationship among the figures portrayed. This subordination was the prerogative of Italian art: it was therefore the point at which the Italian manner and Rembrandt's artistic intentions intersected. Granted, for an entire century, in group portraiture as elsewhere, Netherlandish artists had been attempting to introduce subordination as a means of making the human figure in Northern art more subjectively convincing. The Hollanders, however, still resisted the idea of depicting figures that were at the mercy of larger, outside forces. Consequently, Rembrandt's achievement was to have taken a new look at this fundamental device of the Italians and thereby to have brought about a renewed flowering of painting in Holland — one which, by modern estimations, turned out to be its supreme achievement.

The generation of artists after Rembrandt had already lost the ability to take this foreign, Romance element and make it their own. When it appeared in more familiar form in French art, it actually triggered a process of decline. The thoroughly alien, Italian way of thinking always had a positive, creative,

and stimulating effect on art in Holland, while the more closely related French influence had an immediate crippling effect, soon killing it off entirely.

For the reasons cited in the introduction [p. 63], artists, art lovers, and art historians in general have always admired the three group portraits by Rembrandt that have come down to us intact. As a result, a considerable amount of literature has built up over the years, and I have no intention of disputing that much worthwhile information and some insights of lasting value have been brought to light. Almost all the authors concerned, however, have taken Rembrandt's personal artistic evolution — and modern standards of taste — as the starting point of their investigations. Our strategy is quite different: we intend to examine Rembrandt's three group portraits as links in the larger chain of an evolution that began with Jan van Scorel and Dirk Jacobsz., and which continued on to include the great painters of the mid–seventeenth century. Seeing how closely his earliest solution to the problem of the group portrait is still related to the works of his immediate predecessors, and how systematically he continued to deal with the same problem in his later paintings, will convince us that even Rembrandt was essentially the agent of the artistic volition of his nation and times, albeit an agent of genius, and at times of consummate achievement. This is why we will be looking at these three paintings not from the personal point of view of Rembrandt as an artist trying to solve particular problems but as examples of the problem-solving process common to artists working throughout Holland. For this reason, and for the sake of brevity, I will not refer to the existing literature on the relationships between one work and another, except in a few vital instances.

"The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp"

Rembrandt's birth date is still not known with certainty; nevertheless, even taking the earliest estimates, he could not have been much more than twenty-six when he painted *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*, presently in the Mauritshuis in The Hague (fig. 48). Its attribution would be safe even without the artist's signature and the date of 1632 found on the work, because the painting is known to have caused a great sensation in its day. For the Amsterdam art public of that generation, it apparently represented a paragon of group portraiture, fulfilling everything they could possibly have demanded of the genre most representative of Holland's national style. Of course, the later evolution makes it look as though taste in Amsterdam in Rembrandt's day had momentarily strayed off Holland's generally strict path, only to return to the straight and narrow path shortly thereafter. Nevertheless, Rembrandt was obviously the artist of the hour in Amsterdam in the early 1630s.

The content of *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* is easily described: Dr. Tulp, a renowned surgeon, is depicted as a professor lecturing to seven of his colleagues from the surgeons' guild about certain muscles in the forearm of a male corpse on a dissection table. From this description alone, we can already conclude that the painting, like de Keyser's anatomy lesson of 1619, has a resolved internal coherence. So, let us now see how Rembrandt achieved this.

Fig. 48. Rembrandt
The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp, 1632
The Hague, Mauritshuis

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The professor has an instrument in his right hand that he is using to pull back the muscles in question, while with his left hand he makes the kind of gesture that traditionally accompanies speech. Rembrandt's Dr. Tulp is not directing his attention to the object being demonstrated at all, unlike de Keyser's professor who looks directly at the skeleton; instead, he is turned to the group of men who are listening to his explanation, which establishes a direct and instantaneous psychological connection to them. In their attentiveness, the listeners are subordinating themselves to the professor; however, each of them does so in a different way; they all share the same psychological attentiveness, but it is expressed physically in ways that vary from individual to individual.

The three surgeons situated directly behind the head of the corpse seem to be having the liveliest reactions, because their gestures are the most obvious. One of them is leaning over in order to see better. The man next to him is doing the same in order to hear better, the strain of this effort is reflected in a facial expression that reads almost like pain (pathos = state of being emotionally moved). The third man seems to be attuned in both ways. The reactions of the figures outside this central group, and the expression of their will and emotion, become more and more subdued. The surgeon with the membership list in his hands is already looking more collected as he gazes out toward the viewer. His gaze is not directed; it remains rather abstracted, for he, too, betrays his absolute attentiveness. The same applies to the surgeon at lower left. His head is slightly tilted, and he turns it toward us simply to avoid being seen in lost profile, which would be against the rules of portraiture. Otherwise, his downcast eyes and furrowed brow tell us that he, too, is not about to become overly involved with the viewer but is riveted on the professor's every word. The head of the man next to him on the far left has straightened up completely, his relaxed gaze in profile oriented directly toward the lecturer.

The seventh and last of the surgeons towers above the others, in a posture no less stiff and upright. The direction of his gaze, however, is exceptional, for he is looking directly out at the viewer in a completely frontal position, and pointing with one finger of his right hand toward the professor's demonstration below. So, while the other seven figures seem to cohere internally in their mutual interaction, that is, in subordinating their attentiveness to the professor, the eighth establishes the external coherence with the viewer. He directs the viewer's attention to the lecture with a subordinating point of the finger. Thus, the device of subordination is involved in establishing two relationships: first, that between Tulp and the seven surgeons, who all subordinate themselves to him as lecturer; secondly, that between the uppermost surgeon and the viewer, whereby the viewer is subordinated to the surgeon, and, by extension, to Dr. Tulp as well.

The basic pictorial conception is not completely new as such, but was already encountered in de Keyser's *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Sebastian Egbertsz. Vrij* from 1619, where three men are also subordinated to the lecturing pro-

fessor while a fourth directs the attention of the viewer (or viewers) to the lecturing scene itself. There are, however, notable differences. First of all, in de Keyser's work, the man who establishes the connection to the viewer is not standing alone but is accompanied by a fifth individual, so that, at least in terms of their gazes, the two men are equivalent. Rembrandt, on the other hand, has reduced the number of figures in charge of the external coherence to one — a significant difference. Another difference is that Rembrandt has the professor turned directly toward his audience, while de Keyser used the skeleton for that purpose. All in all, Rembrandt's solution of having everyone subordinated to the single speaker is more focused, more coherent, and consequently more effective than is de Keyser's choice of dividing up subordination between the professor and the skeleton. We have still not yet touched upon the most important distinction between the two anatomy lessons, which concerns not so much what the painting depicts but how things are depicted.

Let us first look at the two sets of active figures who do the subordinating in each painting. Rembrandt has treated them differently from de Keyser, and far more memorably. Whereas the professor in the latter's work is forced into line, in a coordinated position with the others, so that he is hard to pick out at first, Dr. Tulp in Rembrandt's work is easy to spot: he occupies a generous amount of space, while both of his hands are making distinctive gestures. The way he looks at his students, the way he is dressed, all of this leaves us with no doubt as to the force behind the internal coherence within the painting.

Rembrandt has also placed more emphasis on the figure who subordinates the viewer, thus establishing external coherence. Granted, he has relegated him from the first to the back row; nevertheless, because this figure functions as the crowning peak of the entire composition, he immediately catches the viewer's attention and becomes a focal point that cannot be overlooked. The move away from an insistent proximity produces a more intimate and more enduring impression upon the viewing subject. Both of the dominant figures in Rembrandt's painting have more significance and impact.

On the other hand, Rembrandt made the listening surgeons proportionally more subordinate to the professor than their counterparts in de Keyser's work. As a result, they are no longer merely embodiments of neutral attentiveness but show definite signs of will or emotion. De Keyser's figures overstep the confines of attentiveness only very slightly, mainly in the sense of pleasure they express in the manner of Hals (especially around the eyes). The animated, physical gestures of Rembrandt's surgeons, especially the way they incline their heads or lean forward, are read as real expressions of will. Signs of emotion are especially evident in the features of the surgeon next to Tulp's right hand. Rembrandt made detailed studies of these kinds of facial expression while he was still in Leiden, largely in the form of engravings. They document his struggle to gain control over the depiction of emotion as reflected in the human face, and they have long been famous. Nevertheless, in my opinion, they have never been sufficiently or expressly acknowledged as further evidence of Romanist influence on the formation of the young painter's artistic

volition. The psychological expressions of will and emotion are more easily translated into physical movements in explicit and lively ways than are the neutral expressions of pure, selfless attentiveness. This explains the almost violent (in the context of a group portrait) nature of the actions of the three central characters; this nature then gradually settles down as one moves toward the periphery of the group, where it becomes an expression of passive attentiveness.

One thing that needs to be made clear at this point, however, is that Rembrandt never tried to characterize any of his sitters as great thinkers or intellectual giants who could outshine the other figures in the painting and overwhelm, and thereby isolate, the viewer. An Italian artist would have shown at least the professor acting with a superior sense of purpose, but Rembrandt was never interested in depicting strong-willed individuals. As a result, all of these academics, not excepting the eminent Dr. Tulp himself, share the same affable, soulful, Teutonic facial expressions. Rembrandt never arranged or ranked the figures in his paintings according to their "intellectual merits." To assume that he did so would be the ultimate misinterpretation of his artistic intentions.

So, what is new about Rembrandt's pictorial conception in *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* is not the dual subordination, which, on the contrary, is the most definitive proof that he was profoundly steeped in the artistic traditions of his immediate predecessors throughout Holland. Rather, his innovation was the greater degree of individuality in their psychological connection (that is, attentiveness) in space and time. Whereas de Keyser's Dr. Egbertsz. is looking at the object of his demonstration, Rembrandt's Dr. Tulp is looking his listeners straight in the eye. And these in their turn, through their spontaneous movements and their show of emotion, reveal an attentive, inner participation in the main action. Figures characterized in this sort of lively, individualized way naturally seem more connected with each other on a psychological level than do those portrayed with more objective, generalized expressions of attentiveness, even in the hands of an artist like de Keyser. Even this early work clearly shows Rembrandt striving toward a goal that would preoccupy him for the rest of his artistic life, namely, to unite the souls of the figures with each other, and with the soul of the viewer. What hampered such a union at this point was Rembrandt's treatment of the physical gestures necessary to express it, which he felt he had to address first: hence, the figures' conspicuous movements and the affective (not to say affected) expressiveness of some of the heads.

The composition, too, is obviously unified in two ways: in its objective aspect within a plane and subjectively in space. The spatial composition revolves around the kind of center familiar since the days of the civic guard banquets. Here it is created by the operating table and by the cadaver angling slightly into the picture space from right to left. It is bounded by Dr. Tulp on one side of the table, by the two pairs of surgeons occupying each of the next two sides, and by the large folio volume propped open at the feet of the

cadaver. Rembrandt placed three more figures behind the head of the dead man to create a strictly triangular composition whose two-dimensional effect provides a counterbalance to the three-dimensional arrangement. This integration of the two- and three-dimensional aspects of the composition is, of course, no more original to Rembrandt than was the above-mentioned dual subordination used as the unifying device of the pictorial conception. De Keyser's anatomy lesson already consisted of a pyramidal composition with a centralized peak, while his civic guard group portrait of 1632 is an example of a centralized, symmetrical composition combined with a spatial organization in which diagonal elements play a role. The characteristic feature in the composition of Rembrandt's anatomy lesson is, once again, the heightened contrast between its planar and spatial aspects. Nowhere in the art of Holland before this time is there an example of a pyramidal composition as regular and symmetrical as this one. In the works of Rembrandt's early Leiden period, however, there are many examples of compositions based on large triangles with steep sides that are filled with figures carefully arranged in perspective to overlap each other. He was obviously trying to solve the problem of forcing figures that are distributed in space at varying depths into a single plane at the same time. This is the old Baroque problem, associated with Michelangelo. But because Rembrandt, as a Hollander, was paying as much attention to the space between the figures as he was to the figures themselves, he felt free to distribute them in much greater depth. For all that, Rembrandt considered symmetry, pyramidal shapes, and other linear aspects of composition important only as a restraining and regulating force: the real challenge for him was the illusion of depth in the free space between the figures.

Rembrandt's Chiaroscuro

Of all the means available to painters to create a sense of spatial recession, the haptic devices (overlapping and foreshortening) serve to create a sense of the cubic space occupied by solid bodies. Of the two optical devices, shadow can be used not only in the form of shadow on solid bodies to create a sense of cubic space but also in the form of spatial shadow or chiaroscuro to create a sense of free space; in the form of cast shadow it occupies the middle ground between the previous two. The second of the optical devices, sometimes called atmospheric perspective [*Luftperspective*], has the effect of dissolving the contours of objects and modulating local color; it serves purely to evoke a sense of airy free space.

It is typical of Rembrandt's early works like *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* that a relatively large role is still played by foreshortening, a device that Italian artists had superbly mastered, but which the artists of Holland treated with reserve. The progression of the figures' positions—from the surgeon with the pointed beard at the head of the cadaver who bends forward almost horizontally, to the slightly more upright man leaning behind him, and finally to the man furthest back and uppermost who assumes a completely vertical posture—has long been noted and is sometimes cited as the backbone of the

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entire composition. It certainly cannot be denied that these three figures in Rembrandt's work operate much more independently from each other than, for example, the men on the right-hand edge of Werner van den Valckert's civic guard group portrait of 1625 (fig. 41) who are supposed to recede behind each other in space. Nevertheless, it is still questionable whether Rembrandt has really provided his three physicians with enough space for them to assume the positions that they do. This means that at this point the artist still wants us to focus on the mass of figures, more than on the free space that penetrates its voids and gaps.

Much more important than foreshortening for Rembrandt's handling of space is his manipulation of shadow. Sometimes he uses it to model solid objects; however, this shadow no longer has sharp contours but already begins to consist of subtly shifting nuances. It is the type of shadow that causes forms to project out from the picture space toward the viewer but without the kind of sculptural, hard surfaces still characteristic of Valckert's heads, for example, or even of de Keyser's early period. The crucial element in Rembrandt's treatment of space is the way he manipulates spatial shadow or chiaroscuro.

All spatial shadow is ultimately tied to shadows on solid bodies, because it, too, is produced by some object that is blocking a light source. The only difference is that shadow on solid bodies, or modeling shadow, produces firm, haptic contours, while spatial shadow has fluid borders and runs the gamut of possible gradations from dark to light. A person's cheekbone creates a shaded area on the side of the face that is clearly outlined and leaves us in no doubt about how it got there (namely, as a result of the cheekbone). However, if the edges of that shaded area become imprecise, as they increasingly do in Rembrandt's work, then they begin to enter the realm of spatial shadow. A cast shadow, on the other hand, is a type of solid-body shadow, namely, that caused by one solid body on another adjacent one. In this case, also, we are not in doubt about the cause of the shadow, for the firm contours of the cast shadow faithfully reproduce the shape of the source.

Now, both of these elements are missing from spatial shadow: firm contours and a clear understanding of what caused the shadow. For example, two walls coming together in a dark corner of a room always create shadows. It is impossible, however, to locate which part of which wall is specifically causing the shadowy areas, because the shading goes through gradual and imperceptible changes from dark to light that can richly vary depending on the kinds of objects occupying the corner. Moreover, in spatial shadow there is no such thing as absolute darkness, since that would indicate a state of nothingness that would also exclude space. Conversely, there is also no such thing as absolute lightness, because that would entail seeing only the brightly whitewashed walls and not the free space between them. All that notwithstanding, it is obvious that any artist intent on painting the free spaces between solid bodies so that they are autonomous and sensory, that is, visually perceptible, could hardly find a better device than chiaroscuro for doing so. It so happened that the painters of Holland were preparing to do just this,

precisely at the time that Rembrandt appeared on the scene: they were begin-
ning to treat the free spaces between the figures as more or less equal in status
and value to the figures themselves. This can already be seen in Valckert but
particularly in de Keyser, whose preoccupation with this phenomenon in his
later works cannot be overlooked: we have already discovered how the depic-
tion of space is the main artistic means for creating unity in his burgomaster
painting of 1638 (fig. 47). Nevertheless, it is Rembrandt's name that is insep-
arably linked in our minds with the concept of seventeenth-century chiaro-
scuro, and rightly so. Now, its appearance in *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr.
Tulp* is still quite moderate. Nevertheless, although chiaroscuro can never
flourish in portraiture to the same degree as in other categories of painting,
Rembrandt learned how to exploit the device in an extremely refined way in
his later group portraits.

This is a good point at which to define exactly why the artists of Holland
were so acutely interested in manipulating chiaroscuro. They were not simply
concerned with making it visually apparent that the free space in their paint-
ings is something independent and distinct from the solid bodies of the figures.
Making these spaces visible was merely their means to an end. Rather, their
intention was to neutralize, once and for all, the dualism that had existed
between figures (solid bodies occupying cubic space) and free space in order
to depict a single, homogenous whole.

This intention went hand in hand with the pictorial conception that artists
in Holland were developing, for they were also trying to link figures on the
disinterested psychological level (attentiveness) so that the individual psyches
merge into a unified whole in the mind of the viewing subject. Similarly, they
wanted to depict free space as a quantitative, rather than a qualitative, sepa-
ration between solid bodies. Like the figural elements, free space had to take
on manifest characteristics of its own, and to this end it must be made visible.
Conversely, solid objects had to lose their hard boundaries, so artists stopped
giving them firm, linear contours and the smooth local color that generally
goes along with that. Manipulating light and shadow was the means to
achieve this. In this way, solid shapes come to be little more than denser accu-
mulations within the free space that have collected here and there in the paint-
ing and that reflect the infinite gradations of light more clearly than the open
areas around them.

Chiaroscuro is so indispensable a device in this process that it is safe to
say that no painter in Holland in the seventeenth century could possibly have
produced pictures without it. Within this sweeping generalization, however,
there are differences of degree. Even later in the period, there were artists who
still never let the emphasis on connection between the figures make them for-
get the figures themselves, so the dark areas were never allowed to become so
intense as to obscure the figures, even while their contours were clearly dis-
solving around them. These were artists like Carel Fabritius and particularly
Vermeer of Delft, who were just as much painters of light as they were of chiaro-
scuro, meaning that they placed more weight on light than they did on dark.

The distinctive thing about Rembrandt, however, is that he placed the weight overwhelmingly on the darks. And for him, the process of transforming every available tactile surface into lights and darks of varying intensities was something to be taken very seriously. This is presumably what Carl Neumann was referring to (*Rembrandt* [see note 61], 169) when he talked about Rembrandt's chiaroscuro as a metaphysical principle. And that is why I do not understand how this scholar could dispute the obvious fact that chiaroscuro is essentially spatial shadow.[41] Because, however, figures in reality assert themselves more strongly than the free spaces between them, the darkness of Rembrandt's paintings seems to us — with our different notions about the relationship between solid bodies and free space — like an unrealistic and unmotivated exaggeration. And this is exactly how the majority of Rembrandt's contemporaries in Holland began to judge his work by the second half of the seventeenth century, since they had already developed beyond his standpoint in the direction of our modern view.

What we learn from *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* of 1632 is that Rembrandt's favorite preoccupation was manipulating chiaroscuro, though he was certainly not yet applying it as heavily as he would later on. He used it sometimes in connection with figures and sometimes with free space, but not yet as a means of connecting the two into a homogeneous whole, something that would later turn out to be its true function. For example, we find chiaroscuro accumulating around the chest of the surgeon with the look of suffering, but then continuing up around his frilly collar in the form of a relatively firm contour line. The shadows on the collar of the man beneath the apex of the triangle, plus the dark areas on Dr. Tulp's left hand and cuff, are of a similar nature: they still look more like cast shadows than like the results of spatial shadow; their bright areas of reflected light are the only indication of a tendency toward genuine chiaroscuro. Cast shadows like these produced by the harsh incoming light primarily serve to break up light-colored, tangible, self-contained objects like the frilly collars and to rob them of their coherence as haptic, solid objects.

In his early work, Rembrandt was almost constantly looking for ways to apply these shadows; for example, one of the arms of the angel in the engraving of *The Presentation in the Temple* (Bartsch 51) is divided up so abruptly into a dark and a light half that it is hard to recognize it as a complete arm. These early years, therefore, represented for him the first stage in his intended comprehensive solution: he sought above all to manipulate extremes of light and shadow in order to break down by artifice the physical coherence of individual figures as defined by their outlines, to blur the tangible outlines, and to tone down the local color so that it ceased to keep one shape distinct from another. The challenge was still mainly to break up the traditional coherence of solid shapes, so that, later on, they could all the more readily be connected with the surrounding free space, and then, with space as the mediator, to other solid figures.

Finally, let us turn our attention to the dark figure who is looking out of

the painting on the lower left-hand side. His sharp silhouette stands out against the light corpse and gives rise to a shadow that does not connect the two areas but functions in the old way, isolating the one from the other. This is a familiar device that artists had been using since the sixteenth century to make light objects seem to be located further back in space than dark ones. This naturally suggests the existence of free space between the two objects; the sharp silhouette makes any interaction between the two areas impossible, however, so that the foreground shape is completely isolated from the one behind it. The line running along the surgeon's sleeve that divides the two areas looks, in spite of its twists and turns, like a harsh cutting edge. This is another recurrent phenomenon in Rembrandt's early work that later disappears when chiaroscuro begins to obscure all boundaries.

Even in this early work, however, Rembrandt used chiaroscuro extensively as a way of creating the illusion of an interior space in which the group of figures is located. He allows shadows to accumulate within the tunnel vault, around the walls to either side, and in the niches of the pillars. The shadow is occasionally relieved by light areas, such as the one in the corner of the wall behind the head of Dr. Tulp. This sort of chiaroscuro is, of course, not totally new; we have seen it gradually developing since the sixteenth century. What marks it as Rembrandt's is that he subjects it to a qualitative intensification: in principle, he keeps the whole room murky — illuminated only by weak and shimmering areas of light that have fluctuating, indefinite edges. Let us now explore the interior itself.

Cornelis van der Voort's regent group portrait of 1618 brought us for the first time into a convincing interior space by using the corner of a room; even though in the following year de Keyser did not choose to define the location of his anatomy lesson in any detail, artists at this time were generally feeling an ever-increasing need to be specific about the settings of their group portraits. In Rembrandt's anatomy lesson, the interior is defined as never before: not only are we shown two corners of the room, rather than one, but there is even vaulting; that is, the space is delimited not only at the sides but also at the top. On the right side, we can see farther into a space extending back behind the edge of the pillar. There is no doubt about it: this room, filled with spatial shadow that flows into every corner, makes us realize as never before that the figures in the scene before us are enveloped in free space. The painting leaves one conscious not only of the figures, which had always dominated until now, but also of the free space that flows around them.

A closer look at the relationship between the group of figures and their surrounding space, however, quickly reveals the limitation that still prevails here. The group of figures and the free space exist side by side but are not yet convincingly connected. Moreover, we cannot even get a good idea of the size of the room in relation to the figures. Essentially, the figure-to-space relationship is no different from the one that had been in use in the fifteenth century where foreground figures are kept completely disconnected from the infinite space behind them. In this context, the tension between the rigid, triangular

composition tying the figures together within a plane and the more relaxed aspects of the spatial arrangement becomes obvious. On the one hand, the dark spaces tempt us to explore the depths of the room; on the other, the composition of the figures holds them together in a plane in the foreground. Finally, we come to notice that the chiaroscuro associated with the free space does not coincide or blend with that of the figures. Like a pattern on a ground, the group of figures contrasts sharply with the space of the room behind it. And, although the abundant contour modeling is still enough to make the figures look as though they have space flowing around them, it does not suffice to immerse them completely in the interior space. At the stage represented by *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*, Rembrandt's chiaroscuro had not yet developed the all-inclusive integrating function that it would have later on.

Despite all that, the color of the painting is unified. This is not, however, because of the chiaroscuro but because of the greenish tone that leaves its cast on all the local colors and brings them closer to each other. In the painting of Holland, tone serves precisely the same purpose as chiaroscuro and even has the same origin. It is not, however, the modern variety that emanates from solid objects, and that might be described as a kind of common denominator of all local color, but simply the color of the spaces between the solid objects that then imposes its hue on their surfaces.

Tonal painting, a practice particularly associated with the first third of the seventeenth century, predates chiaroscuro painting in Holland. Its disadvantage lies in the fact that, when used effectively to integrate figures, it makes them look even more unnatural than chiaroscuro does. The dominant hue tends to look like a uniform local color (see works by the genre painters of Holland who specialized in social gatherings and by landscape artists in the manner of Duck and van Goyen), because only slight modulations are possible within such a narrow range of color. In spite of all that, tone is absolutely crucial, in moderate doses, for establishing atmospheric perspective, and, for that reason, artists never entirely abandoned this technique. And so, when we stated earlier that no painter working in Holland after 1630 was totally ignorant of chiaroscuro, we could have said just the same of tonal painting. Therefore, the greenish tinge in Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*, as well as in almost all of his other early paintings, proves how close his ties were to the art of his immediate predecessors. Rembrandt never entirely abandoned tone, even in the latter part of his evolution; however, by that time he had switched from green to gold, which has less to do with local color than with the radiant and incandescent qualities of light.

"The Night Watch"

Remarkably enough, in spite of the striking success of *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*, Rembrandt did not paint a single one of the numerous civic guard portraits commissioned in Amsterdam during the 1630s. This was surely not a sign that anyone lacked confidence in his ability to do so. On the contrary, in view of the fact that he had plenty of other commissions, the choice was

probably his own. And that is no surprise, considering that portraiture could offer him relatively little opportunity to pursue the aspect of painting that interested him most, namely, exploring relationships between people on a deep psychological level.

What is surprising, on the other hand, is that, a full ten years after *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*, Rembrandt did agree after all to paint a large group portrait for a civic guard in Amsterdam. This was *The Company of Captain Frans Banning Cock and Lieutenant Willem van Ruytenburgh*, called *The Night Watch* (fig. 49), no. 1246 [RM no. SK-C-5] in the Rijksmuseum, signed by the artist and dated 1642. It is characteristic of Rembrandt that we do not know for sure exactly how many people depicted in this painting are intended to be genuine portraits. We do know how many actually paid for portraits, but the painting contains many more figures than that. Some of them are visible, but even more of them are blocked from view, so that we can only infer their existence from a number of minor details (mainly lances and hats), a situation with a precedent in a work by an unknown Amsterdam artist (fig. 39).

Because we are familiar with Rembrandt's fundamental preference for subordination, we can also guess what sort of pictorial conception he was likely to choose for this next group portrait. We have seen how he allowed Dr. Tulp to subordinate the members of his audience, even though, as full-fledged surgeons, they were technically his equals; thus it seems that much more likely the captain will do the same with his troops. And this is precisely the case, as documented in a descriptive reference to the painting in the records of Captain Frans Banning Cock, the principal patron of the work. It reads, "The captain gives his lieutenant the command for the troops to march." The choice of a specific moment is significant in itself. Though it should be considered a genre episode rather than a historical event, because it no doubt occurred again and again, *The Night Watch* gives us a good indication of how far the artists of Holland had come since the time of Ketel in particularizing aspects of their paintings — specifically fixing them in place and time. Six years after *The Night Watch*, a number of them would be incorporating a specific event as momentous as the Peace of Westphalia into their civic guard portraits.[42]

The internal coherence in *The Night Watch* therefore is based on subordination to the captain. Large in stature, towering well above the others in the exact center of the painting, he steps straight toward the viewer, his left hand extended authoritatively in the direction of the line of march, his head half-turned toward the lieutenant who is walking beside him on the right at a shorter pace. The lieutenant is receiving orders, his head held at a deferential angle, his eyes directed respectfully toward the captain. The lieutenant thus truly looks as though he is subordinating himself directly to the captain on a psychological level.

Rembrandt did not attempt to make the other guardsmen, who number more than a dozen, express their subordinate positions in the same way. Instead, he made the lieutenant, who is the vehicle for carrying out the captain's

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Fig. 49. Rembrandt
The Night Watch
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

orders as implied in the title, also the vehicle for the other men's subordina-
tion in the artistic sense. The guardsmen are behaving precisely as we would
expect men to behave who know that they are about to receive their marching
orders: all are absorbed with themselves, or rather with their weapons, in a
variety of ways that in itself is a tribute to Rembrandt's inexhaustible imagi-
nation.[43] Moreover, the actions of all the men clearly communicate the message
that everyone is on the move, something that all interpretations of this paint-
ing have in common, as is already apparent in the old title of the work, *The
Night Watch,* meaning an evening march. The only thing that modern inter-
pretation has changed is to replace night with day, torch light with sunshine.

Therefore *The Night Watch* has inner coherence just as *The Anatomy
Lesson of Dr. Tulp* does. What is new and surprising about *The Night Watch,*
however, is that the subordinating effect of the spoken word (in this case, the
command) operates directly on a psychological level only for one figure (the
lieutenant); for all of the others, it takes the form of physical activity. In view
of what we already know about Rembrandt's artistic volition, and given the
nature of this kind of pictorial conception, it must have been a priority of his
to use everything he had to move the captain and the lieutenant (namely, the
ones directly linked to each other on a psychological level) into the fore-
ground, while treating the remaining figures with their physical actions, in
spite of the variety of detail, as a uniform whole in the background. The
captain's command to the lieutenant is the main theme; the troop of men is
something incidental, comparable to a background interior or landscape.[44]

Therefore, once Rembrandt had adopted the principle of subordination,
he took it to its ultimate conclusion. In fact, artists in general who adopted
the device tended to take it to extremes. A good example of this is Rembrandt's
predecessor in this respect, de Keyser: in his group portrait of 1632, the offi-
cers who are presenting themselves to the viewer are far more prominent
than the others. As pointed out earlier (pp. 247 ff.), de Keyser probably found
himself at odds with his patrons in Amsterdam over the subordinated compo-
sition, for he decided to coordinate his next civic guard portrait, which was
executed in the very next year, and make all the portrait heads visually equal
in status. Rembrandt, however, was not one to practice such restraint: he
pursued his own artistic inclinations farther than most of his contemporaries
dared to follow.

We have observed a number of times that group portraiture is an accurate
gauge of the fundamental characteristics of all genres of painting in Holland
and that one of these basics is a preference for coordinated composition.
Therefore, the kind of pictorial conception represented by *The Night Watch,*
which involves taking more than a dozen portrait heads and deliberately rele-
gating them to the background, so that a mere two individuals can stand out
as striking portraits, signals the downfall not only of the idea of coordinated
composition in particular but by extension of group portraiture as a whole.
Assuming we are still justified in speaking of *The Night Watch* as a portrait at
all, it would have to be in terms of a double portrait, featuring the captain and

the lieutenant against a background peopled by figures that are not intended as portraits. And this was precisely what most of the people involved in commissioning the portrait objected to, along with countless members of the general public in Amsterdam who had no direct stake in the painting at all. And, even today, most would agree that this criticism was decidedly warranted. One regrets only that, amid all the fussing about who upstaged whom, Rembrandt's contemporaries totally forgot about the inherent artistic value of the painting itself. In my opinion, however, even this is unfair to the good citizens of Amsterdam: *The Night Watch* comes as a complete surprise, not only as a group portrait, but even as a Hollandish work of any genre.

How bizarre it must have seemed to discover that the artist who had most distinguished himself as a painter of "attentiveness" was suddenly depicting a dozen figures in intense physical activity in a portrait! Rembrandt astonishes us here once again as the one artist among his countrymen who was most involved in the means and objectives of the art of the Romance countries. Of course, anyone who has looked closely at his works of the 1630s will easily recognize *The Night Watch* as the product of a long, steady, and consistent evolution. We have already observed how the attentiveness of the figures in the center of the composition of *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* is expressed in terms of lively physical movements (leaning forward, pathos that reveals inner struggle), while the positions of the figures on the periphery of the group begin to assume a more vertical posture, and their facial features a more peaceful, neutral state of attentiveness.

We can still find remnants of this pictorial conception in *The Night Watch*: on either side, we discover a calmly attentive, vertical figure just along the edge on each side of the painting. The one on the left is sitting on the banister rail of the steps, looking over at the main group; the one on the right is listening to the instructions of his sergeant. Furthermore, the figures farthest back in the central part of the composition are also depicted as observers and onlookers: the guardsman on the right behind the standard-bearer calmly looks straight ahead; the man next to him, with only the left side of his head showing, has caught a glimpse of something up in the sky, as though he had just stepped out of a dark interior and was interested in the weather. Between these passive markers, however, is an unprecedented scene of varied activity.

Now is the time to recall that until 1640, the neighboring Southern Netherlands were home to an artist who was more adept than any other at rendering the human body in motion. It is no secret that Rembrandt in the 1630s directly patterned himself after Rubens, the Romanist Fleming, not only in general but frequently down to minute details. This situation continued after the death of the Antwerp master, for, at the same time that Rembrandt was painting *The Night Watch,* he was also engraving the lion hunts, a theme that, like *The Battle of the Amazons* or *The Massacre of the Innocents,* was in complete accord with Rubens' artistic volition.

Rembrandt's objective in rendering the human body in motion, however, was completely different from that of his Flemish colleague, both in general

and in particular. Generally, Rubens wanted the individual actions of his figures to fuse into one single, grand, overriding movement, whereas Rembrandt saw to it that they canceled each other out to create a relatively serene foil for the main scene in the foreground, which he then treated on a psychological level. Furthermore, the way these artists handled detail mirrors the way they treated the larger aspects of their work. Rembrandt's figures move in a leaden and ponderous manner compared to Rubens'. This is because Rubens always made a point of emphasizing those figures whose movements typify the dominant action involved and its expected immediate consequences. His lion hunts are perhaps the most compelling and obvious examples of this. Rembrandt, on the other hand, true to his origins in Holland, depicted not only the action itself but also its preliminaries. He leaned more toward portraying the psychological intention, the intellectual conception, and the attentiveness associated with the moment just before something happens.

The activities of the guardsmen in *The Night Watch* are typical of this: one man is observantly loading his musket, while another checks the lock of his. A third man assumes an aiming and firing position: his hands are blocked from view, and the barrel of his musket is being fended off by another of his colleagues. Another aspect of this strategy is the way the flag is hoisted and the lances raised into a new position. All of these activities are certainly contingent on the impending march; still, they qualify more as acts of preparation than they do as manifestations of the march itself. Moreover, this tendency to focus on the initial stages of a particular activity is just another manifestation of the one-sided relationships that we typically find in earlier group portraits from Holland, where the artists depicted their portrait figures as frozen in the midst of an action that demanded the viewer's imaginative intervention to complete.

Our analysis has now led us to draw two conclusions about Rembrandt's use of movement in *The Night Watch*. First of all, as in *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*, the particular movements of the individuals were merely the means toward his greater artistic goal of making their attentiveness manifest. Secondly, the action as a whole is intended to do nothing more than provide a lively backdrop for the foreground group and its psychological interaction. Rembrandt handled movement in other works that are not portraits in analogous ways, as a look at a few examples will show. *The Windmill*, dated 1641 (Bartsch 233), depicts a double motif in the foreground—a windmill towering over a house—that stands out abruptly against a vast background receding into infinity, in which all detail is suppressed. This is the pictorial conception that Rembrandt used in the landscape etchings of this period, but which he then gradually toned down in works like *Three Trees, The Omval, Bridge over the Six,* by allowing the distant background to connect more closely with the main motif. On the other hand, in the engraving *Saint Jerome in His Study* (Bartsch 105), dated 1642, the darkness has invaded almost all the available space, and, in spite of some glimmering areas of light here and there, has created a kind of uniform matrix out of which the form of the saint materializes.

Obviously, Rembrandt saw the physical movement of his figures as little more than a means of enhancing their expression of attentiveness, with its power to bond them together on a spiritual level. The actions of the guardsmen, therefore, are simply his way of visually expressing how the captain's command is transmitted. It starts out by registering as the immediate psychological response of the lieutenant, which we read in his facial expression and in the position of his head; it then reverberates in indirect ways through the various reactions of the men, extending all the way to the ones at the edge of the group. Rembrandt's interpretation alienated his countrymen because it was too far away from the norm of their artistic volition. Again, it is necessary to remind ourselves that what separated Rembrandt from his compatriots was his acceptance of the Romance practices of exploiting subordination as a compositional principle and physical movement as an expression of will,[45] even though he intended to use these exclusively for perfecting objectives that were truly typical of Holland.

Rembrandt was undoubtedly successful at establishing internal coherence in *The Night Watch,* even if his solution was not exactly to the liking of his contemporaries from Holland. Now, let us move on to consider the way he handled external coherence, namely, the one relationship that was absolutely essential to the group portraiture of Holland and especially that of Amsterdam. This aspect is most clearly established when the individuals portrayed in the painting show themselves conscious of the presence of a viewer not visible in the painting but assumed to occupy the space in front of the painting, thought of as an extension of the foreground.

A general rule of group portraiture up to the time of Rembrandt, particularly in Amsterdam, had been that, though most of the members of the civic guard looked in the direction of the viewer and thereby subordinated themselves to the viewer, at least one of them was still responsible for subordinating the viewer to himself by looking the viewer straight in the eye. This was still the case with de Keyser in 1632, but that same year, Rembrandt abandoned the idea of having the sitters gazing passively out of the painting, although he did retain the one figure in charge of actively subordinating the viewer. The very next year (fig. 46), however, de Keyser decided to dispense with any sort of physical gestures that might have interacted directly with the viewer. Instead, by having each of the sitters turn a calm, attentive gaze in the viewer's direction, he subordinated all of them, without a single exception, to the viewer. Despite the figures' passive posture, however, their focused, sharp glances contain a hint of active will, and this results in the sitters being coordinated with the viewer, which the artist obviously intended.

The figures in *The Night Watch* qualify neither as passive gazers nor as active liaisons with the viewer. Granted, a few of the men in the back row are looking out toward the front, but not a single one of their gazes contains even a trace of the kind of alert attentiveness that could still be seen in de Keyser's figures. As mentioned before, Rembrandt intended the guardsmen to function as a group within the painting, not as distinct individuals. Only the captain

and the lieutenant emerge from the crowd as personalities; but, then again, the lieutenant concentrates wholly on his superior officer. The captain's somewhat haughty gaze (which is thus more typical of Romance countries than of Holland) is, admittedly, not focused directly on the lieutenant at his side, but something about its direction leaves us with the distinct impression that his attention is entirely taken up with the intent of the words he is speaking rather than anything outside the painting. As a result, it seems as if the figures depicted in the painting have no connection to the unseen viewer. In fact, however, the connection is there, but it has been established by means that were not yet commonly exploited to such an extent at this stage in the evolution of painting in Holland.

The secret of this work's irresistible effect on the modern viewer has long been thought to be the astounding treatment of the figures' movements, which makes the two officers in the foreground in particular, but also the men in the background, seem to be marching out directly toward the viewer. Strictly speaking, however, it is not so much the movement itself that creates this impression: Rembrandt's contour lines are much too vigorously suppressed to give the viewer that kind of information. Rather, what fascinates us is the way the color unmistakably informs us of the figures' inner intention to move in our direction in the very next instant. And modern subjectivism immediately recognized this as a satisfying solution to a problem closely related to its own.

In this painting, the connection with the viewer is no longer established by means of the earlier solution of depicting figures who gaze with expressions of pure attentiveness into space. Here, the figures' attentiveness is individual and specific. The hand of the captain, extended straight out toward the viewer, is the clear signal that the whole troop of guardsmen, in the next instant, will dutifully carry out the given command and march out into the space of the viewing subject. De Keyser had already used this idea in 1632 (fig. 44), but his marchers seem to be stuck halfway. Rembrandt was the first Northern artist daring enough to break the thousand-year-old rule that the movement in a painting has to unfold within a plane or at least along diagonals; instead, he allowed it to move straight out toward the viewer. As already mentioned, however, it is not Rembrandt's treatment of movement per se that makes such a gripping, subjective impression on the viewer. Rather, it is the way in which the pictorial conception, particularly as represented by the outstretched hand of the captain, expresses the psychological intention of the figures: once again, true to his origins in Holland, Rembrandt was not concerned with the conspicuous, physical effects of movement, as his Flemish counterpart Rubens was, but with its psychological sources.

This point in the evolution is so crucial that we are obliged to spend more time exploring its implications. We always have to start with the assumption that the straightforward orientation of the portrait figure to the viewer is simply an expression of the Baroque dualistic interpretation of object and subject. Classical antiquity avoided orienting figures this way, because it thought

solely in terms of the objects depicted. Modern art also avoids it, but for the opposite reasons: it acknowledges only the viewing subject, and from its perspective depicted objects can be reduced to nothing more than sensations of the subject. Baroque art had already emancipated the viewing subject, while at the same time continuing to maintain the separate existence of the depicted object to a certain degree. When Baroque artists depicted figures, trees, architecture, and the like, they were always eager to make it clear that all of those painted objects existed only for the viewer's sake. This was doubly crucial in the case of portraiture, because, for the viewing subject, there is apparently nothing more objective than the presence of a human being not oneself. And that is why the artists of Holland spent an entire century anxiously discouraging any kind of interactive (objective) relationships among the individual portrait figures in their group portraits and instead insisted on linking them up with invisible persons outside the painting (subjects).

Now, in *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp,* Rembrandt immediately reduced the number of figures involved in the interactive relationship with the viewer to one; nevertheless, he allowed all the others to interact with each other. His creation of interactive relationships among the figures themselves, however, by no means signals a return to the objectivistic pictorial conception of antiquity; on the contrary, it marks a further advance toward the subjectivism of modern times. This is because Rembrandt kept the relationship, whenever possible, on a purely psychological level. Anyone who confronts *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* as if it were an antique relief with a mythological subject or a Christian painting of a religious scene will get nothing out of it, since Rembrandt's work depicts neither a straightforward action nor a basic emotion. To appreciate the figures' attentiveness, as expressed in the subtle range of their responses within the painting, we had to carry out a systematic psychological analysis of the facial expression of every single one of the heads (p. 256), something that the average person (as opposed to the art historian) usually does unconsciously. The viewer is expected to become so deeply involved in the psychological workings of the scene that the objective, physical qualities of the event become little more than manifestations of the viewer's own inner experience. As is known, this psychological approach to art is also one of the ways modern artists can subjectivize any given action depicted objectively in a painting.

It would be highly instructive to analyze specifically which aspects of *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* do not live up to modern standards of subjectivity, for that would also help us to document how much Rembrandt was still tied to the lingering objectivity of his own Baroque age. As tempting as such a digression would be, we cannot pursue it here. It remains significant that in his group portrait of 1632 Rembrandt did not feel he could limit himself to the more intimate means of subjectivization available to him as an artist from Holland, namely, subordination and internal coherence. Rather, he still insisted on a clear and direct relationship between the viewer and at least one of the figures in the painting.

Until we consider all the artist's works, rather than limiting ourselves to just his three or four group portraits, there is little chance of gaining any deeper insight into the evolutionary forces that underlie what we routinely call the "Rembrandt problem." That would mean writing a monograph about Rembrandt, however, which someone will have to do someday on the basis outlined here. For obvious reasons, such an undertaking would outrun the scope of the present work; we will therefore have to restrict ourselves to examining a few selected examples from other genres to help us understand these crucially important phenomena.

To gain an idea of how Rembrandt typically handled the pictorial conception of an image other than a portrait in his earliest period, to which *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* also belongs, let us turn to a theme that is extremely objective, namely, religious history painting. The best candidate for this purpose is the series of scenes from the Passion commissioned by Prince Frederick Henry of Orange. One of the earliest in the series is *The Raising of the Cross* in the Pinakothek in Munich, for which the Albertina possesses a preliminary sketch in the form of a chalk drawing with wash (fig. 50) that is very close to the original painting. The moment depicted is when six executioners have raised the cross with the crucified Christ up to a forty-five-degree angle and are about to make the final effort to hoist it into a vertical position. As an aside, it is interesting to observe how Rembrandt's coloristic treatment of the men's outlines robs them almost entirely of the kind of firm, tangible, linear contours that would automatically emphasize their physical movements. This is in accordance with the Hollandish rule that, whenever possible, physical action should be translated into a psychological form of the expression of intention, namely, attentiveness.

Our main concern, however, involves the relationships between the figures. Naturally, the six executioners are subordinated to their victim, and the same goes for the figures in the background, Jews on the left and Christ's supporters on the right. Thus far, this adds up to perfect internal coherence in the picture. But how are we to account for the towering figure in Turkish dress who has placed himself to the left of the crucified Christ, almost aggressively distracting the viewer's attention away from the dominant figure of the action and onto himself? He is obviously the captain in charge of carrying out the execution, and Rembrandt considered this function to be so important that he allowed it to compete equally with the main action and to divide the viewer's interest between the two.

What we observe here is one more confirmation of Rembrandt's aversion to illustrating an action solely for its own sake, even when he knew he could tone down the blatantly physical aspects of the figures' movements by using various artistic techniques. He felt he had to indicate the cause of the action in a way that could neither be overlooked nor misunderstood. The cause, however, is no manifest physical act, but a psychological one: the spoken word of command as expression of a mental impulse. The human need to understand the cause of something operates clearly and exclusively in the realm

of the inner experience of the viewing subject, and this puts cause squarely into the realm of the subjective. In essence, Rembrandt placed his flamboyant captain where he is for the sake of the viewer, just as he did the one surgeon who apostrophizes the viewer in *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*.

Otherwise, the internal coherence in the drawing is basically the result of subordination to Christ, just as all but one of the surgeons in *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* were subordinated to the professor. The only difference is that, because of the deep, objectivistic roots of group portraiture described earlier, it was still necessary for the one physician to take up direct contact with the viewer and thus supply the rest of the scene and his other colleagues with its rationale. In both cases, the cause of the action has to be present for the image to have the requisite inevitability that makes it qualify as a genre scene according to strict requirements of the art of Holland.

Fortunately, we can now put this conclusion to the test. It has long been common knowledge that Rembrandt's *Raising of the Cross* is directly based on the altarpiece with the same theme by Rubens in Antwerp cathedral. A comparison of these two paintings reveals those aspects that the artist from Holland, in spite of starting with the same subject matter, found necessary to alter in the work of his Flemish colleague. The central panel of Rubens' work includes only the executioners with the crucified Christ; Rubens apparently did not feel the need to include the cause of all the activity. What the Flemish artist was creating, of course, was a Catholic, Romanist history painting that presented action purely for its own sake, even if the action was occasioned by a miracle. The artist from Holland, however, needed to satisfy the genre criterion of compelling, urgent necessity, so that the person viewing it should be aware of the immediate, necessary cause of the action.

Numerous paintings, drawings, and etchings of the 1630s attest to Rembrandt's continued reliance on this pictorial conception. In *The Descent from the Cross* (Bartsch 81), the figure of Joseph of Arimathea assumes the role played by the captain in Turkish garb in the scene with *The Raising of the Cross*. Another very enlightening example is the large *Raising of Lazarus* (Bartsch 73). In this case, Lazarus is the cause of the internal coherence; every gaze and emotional expression is oriented in his direction. The Christ figure next to him, however, is the main protagonist of the scene; although none of the other figures in the painting pays any attention to him, he nevertheless provides the viewer with the major clue as to what is going on.

Furthermore, from early in his career, Rembrandt's strategy of subjectivizing the objective action in the scene by including the cause of the action was further enhanced by his treatment of the physical setting. For example, a round arch frequently frames the main motif of a picture. The opening of the arch directly faces the viewer and functions, albeit in a less explicit manner, like the physician in charge of external coherence in *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*. It says to the person standing before it: "This scene has been painted for you alone." Other devices that Rembrandt used to achieve the same effect include arranging the main motif within a door or window frame with its

curtain drawn to the side (as in the so-called *Woodcutter's Family*), or placing a flight of steps in the extreme foreground to form a direct bridge between the setting of the action and the spectator.

These observations, in my opinion, open the way for a true understanding of Rembrandt's pictorial conception of *The Night Watch*. To establish perfect external coherence anchored in time and space, the artist opted for subordination as the basis of the internal coherence. If, however, one of the prominent participants within the group had been charged with taking up direct contact with the viewer, as is still the case in *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp,* the perfect impression of inner coherence would have been disturbed. Therefore, Rembrandt decided to eliminate the liaison figure entirely from group portraiture and to replace it with the devices already used in his nonportrait works as means of clearly and effectively establishing external coherence. First, he included a depiction of the cause of the action (the command to march) and, second, the physical agent that sets off the movement of the whole group in the direction of the viewer (specifically, the captain's hand pointing straight out of the picture).

There is an extensive series of scenes dating from the late 1630s and involving a large number of figures that document the gradual transition from the first stage of Rembrandt's pictorial conception, as represented by *The Raising of the Cross* (fig. 50), to the second stage. These works include a large chalk drawing in the Albertina, an Old Testament scene with Joseph that has usually been thought to depict the one in which Joseph has his brothers' belongings searched, as they depart from Egypt, to incriminate them (falsely) as thieves (fig. 51). A number of aspects, however, speak against this interpretation — scribes busy with their accounts, cattle, women with children — which are more in line with delivering tribute. Nevertheless, I am not prepared to propose any other Old Testament source at the moment.

The focal point of the action is obviously on the right-hand side of the drawing, where a figure in a turban is leaning forward to get a better look at whatever the man below is offering him in the palm of his hand. Of the other figures, however, there is only one so arresting that our eyes return to him again and again: this is the tall man in the turban who stands on a platform, leaning on the balustrade and watching the whole colorful throng teeming at his feet, his head tilted slightly at an angle. The relationship between the first two men (analogous to the one between the captain and the lieutenant in *The Night Watch*) is apparently the subordinating factor that establishes the internal coherence: either directly or indirectly, all of the hustle and bustle of the other visible figures engaged in looking about or hauling goods revolves around them. The turbaned overseer,[46] however, is the original orchestrator of the whole course of events and therefore the one in charge of external coherence, the counterpart of the captain in *The Raising of the Cross.*

The pictorial conception, like that of *The Raising of the Cross,* makes one individual responsible for the internal coherence and another for the external coherence, instead of allowing one person to function in both capacities as is
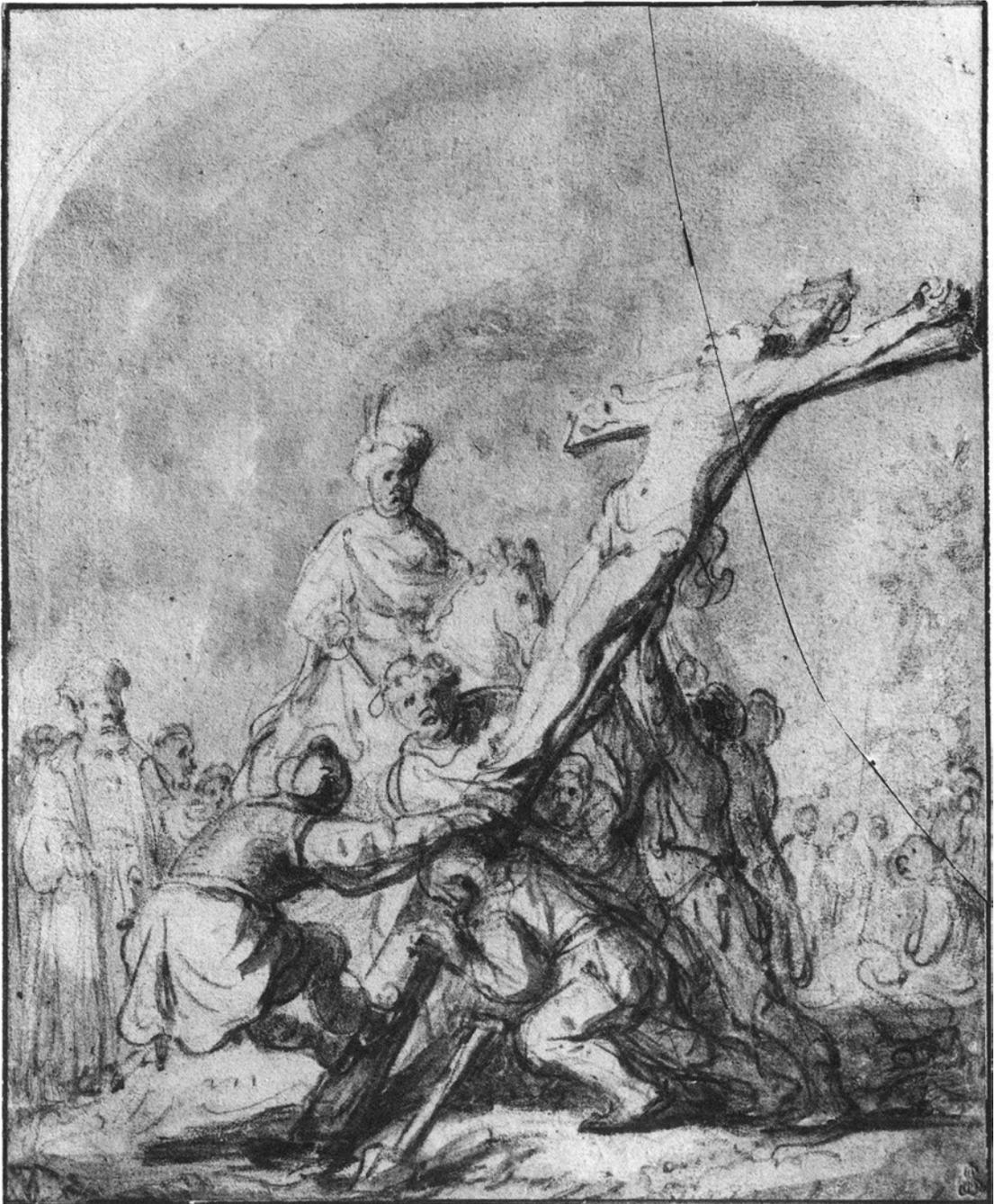
Fig. 50. Rembrandt
The Raising of the Cross
Chalk drawing with wash
Vienna, Albertina

Fig. 51. Rembrandt
Episode from the Old Testament Story of Joseph (?)
Chalk drawing
Vienna, Albertina

the case in *The Night Watch*. The way the *Old Testament Scene with Joseph* limits the number of figures engaged in establishing the internal coherence to two, however, does foreshadow the situation in the later work. So does the varied way in which the numerous activities of the secondary figures are carefully differentiated from each other, unlike the ones in *The Raising of the Cross*, which are treated as one general mass with little individuality. Furthermore, in that picture there were still more figures interacting within the painting, namely, the executioners around Christ, who do not communicate the idea of the subordinate relationship as purely and clearly as do the captain and the lieutenant in *The Night Watch*, or the two men involved in offering and accepting tribute in the drawing in the Albertina.

Let us return to the composition of *The Night Watch*. The important thing to notice particularly is that, in comparison to the earlier *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*, the figures are much more intimately and harmoniously related to the surrounding free space; they are, so to speak, immersed in it. This is true thanks to the naturally integrating effects of chiaroscuro and in spite of the obligatory highlighting of the faces characteristic of portraiture. Of course, there is nothing modern about *The Night Watch*. In a modern painting, space is the artist's primary concern: the figures can be arbitrarily arranged with respect to depth, and the viewer must rely on his or her own experience to make (purely subjective) sense of their relationship. *The Night Watch* could never have operated in this way, because the remnants of objectivity that still linger in the pictorial conceptions of Rembrandt and his contemporaries would have prevented them from creating a painting that consisted of a truly subjective impression. It is also obvious to any careful observer that the proportions of the figures neither match each other nor the setting as they actually would in everyday visual experience. Still, this was an enormous step forward in comparison to everything that preceded it.

The empty areas to the left and right of the central group are rendered more convincing because they are not bordered by a dense row of figures but pierced by various projecting objects such as legs, parts of muskets, or lances. Nevertheless, Rembrandt knew that there was no way he could completely dispense with symmetry and its power to organize the two-dimensional aspects of the composition; this is evident in the treatment of both line and color. The troop breaks down into a row of men in the central area whose heads run along an almost horizontal line, plus two groups on either side whose heads rise slightly along a curve as they near the edge of the painting. The dark-clad captain establishes a dominant center both in regard to the linear composition and to the distribution of color. To the left and right of him are the light shapes of the lieutenant and of the fairy-tale figure of the girl caught in a ray of sunlight, plus a guardsman on either side clothed in dark red.

The most important aspect of the arrangement is how, along the entire width of the picture and perpendicular to it, that is, within the picture plane, Rembrandt created an animated row of figures arranged behind and at right angles to the line of march of the two officers in the foreground who are

stepping out toward the viewer. This row on the left moves concentrically, beginning with the inward-facing guardsman perched on the low wall, continuing to the girl caught in the sunbeam, and then to the man firing off his musket. It concludes on the right side with another concentrically arranged group, the two interacting figures discussed earlier, one of whom extends his right arm horizontally no less than a quarter of the way through the entire width of the painting. Behind these figures, whose movement is to the right or left (within a plane), the movement of the composition is once more out of the background toward the viewer. And, even though this movement toward the foreground represents a heightened and unprecedented form of spatial illusionism, no one can fail to notice that Rembrandt still breaks up the larger group of figures into three successive planes of recession that keep the movement in check, just as the planar effects of the symmetrical distribution of lines and colors counterbalance the pockets of space between the figures.

"The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Deyman"

After 1642 Rembrandt painted no more civic guard group portraits. This was not necessarily the result of the disgruntled clientele of *The Night Watch,* since this kind of commission, as pointed out earlier, generally died out in Amsterdam after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. On the other hand, he did continue to produce group portraits, so that we have one for every decade in the forty years of his creative life. The one from the 1650s, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Deyman,* has survived only in the form of a small, sad fragment (fig. 53; Rijksmuseum, no. 1250 [AHM no. A 7394]) and a rapid sketch from the Six Collection (fig. 52; from Lippmann, *Rembrandts Handzeichnungen* [*recte: Original Drawings of Rembrandt,* see note 48], n.s., no. 56). The painting was damaged in a fire, and its loss is certainly regrettable; however, art-historically speaking, the situation is far from hopeless, because both sketch and fragment contain enough information for us to draw conclusions at least about the essential features of the work's pictorial conception and composition.

Subordination seems to have dominated both the conception and the composition of the painting. The professor stands in the center of the image behind the corpse, whose skull has just been opened to show its contents. The sketch, of course, does not adequately reveal the nuances of attentiveness exhibited by the figures looking on; the fragment of the painting, however, preserves the head of one of the assistants; he, at least, was shown subordinated to the professor's teaching, and it is probably safe to assume the same for the others as well.[47] As in *The Night Watch,* it looks as though the internal coherence involved all the figures with no exceptions, and that the figure in charge of external coherence addressing the viewer in the anatomy lesson of 1632 had also fallen by the wayside. Of course, having only these two documents available makes it impossible for us to determine how Rembrandt handled the more subtle psychological interpretation that took the place of such a liaison figure. All that can be said with certainty is that the assistant
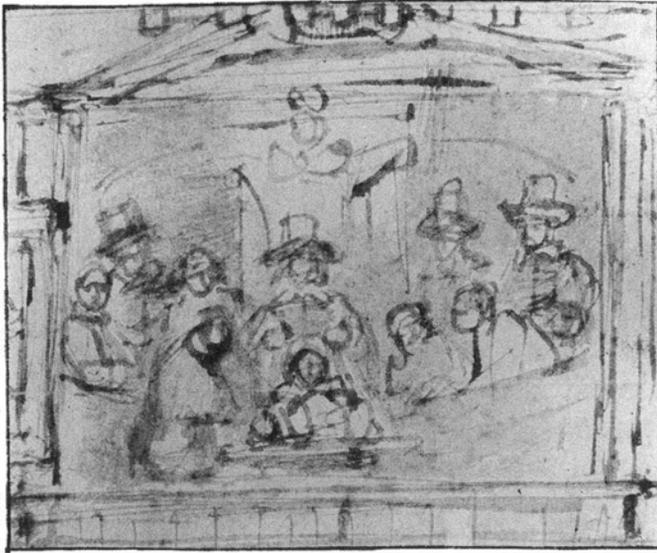
Fig. 52. Rembrandt
Sketch for *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Deyman*
Amsterdam, Six Collection

Fig. 53. Rembrandt
Fragment from *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Deyman*, 1656
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

depicted in the fragment standing right next to the corpse shows none of the signs of physical animation that inform the central group of surgeons of 1632. Instead, the figure's expression speaks of concentrated attentiveness expressed on a psychological level.

The physical means used to establish external coherence are, therefore, all the more striking. The corpse lies in a foreshortened position perpendicular to the viewer, thus giving the professor a frontal placement as well. Furthermore, as is typical of a Northern artist, Rembrandt exploits the strict symmetry of the composition, which will be discussed shortly, as a means of taking the viewer into account. Finally, the use of framing as a way of conveying the subjectivity of the image was clearly and unquestionably part of the artist's intention.[48]

The most striking characteristic of the composition of the sketch is the strict symmetry that begins to bring to mind the earlier church tradition of *sacra conversazione* altarpieces. One ought not to forget that a perfunctory pen-and-ink sketch has no way of indicating how the artist tempered the linear, planar effect of this symmetry with the depth-producing effect of a full coloristic treatment, but even the small fragment of the resulting painting that has survived is enough to prove that Rembrandt did just that. Rembrandt's reversion to symmetry is nonetheless remarkable at this point. After all, this was an artist who in his early years conscientiously placed the figures in his compositions at varying depths, an artist who softened contours and applied chiaroscuro in such a random way that his paintings could no longer be read only as surface. In general, we identify symmetry as one of the main devices associated with the objective approach of antique and Italian Renaissance art. Consequently, it is imperative to find out why Holland's greatest artist late in his career decided to adopt a means of expression associated with classicism and objectivism. What emerges on closer examination is surprising. Rembrandt was not seizing upon symmetry and composition within a plane because he was becoming more objectivistic, but quite the opposite: the artistic volition of this artist from Holland was tending in an increasingly subjective direction.

It has already been mentioned why Rembrandt was open to incorporating symmetry into his pictorial conception. The Northern viewer would assume that artists arranged figures symmetrically for the sake of the viewer, not because those figures occurred that way naturally: in other words, not because symmetry was somehow part of their objective nature. Classical art did the opposite: classical artists grouped objects symmetrically because they regarded symmetry as an essential, objective quality of those objects, which only became obscured and confused when filtered through the sensory perceptions of human observers.

Moreover, even the physical expression that Rembrandt sought in symmetry was totally opposed to that used by classical artists. All linear phenomena operate in a plane. There are, however, two modes of planar phenomena: the haptic mode, in which objects seen at close range stand tangibly side by side

in height and width, and the optic mode, in which objects seen from a distance are presented to the eye even though they are tangibly behind each other at different depths. Unlike his classical predecessors, Rembrandt did not exclude free space in favor of the figures but rather connected the figures with the free space into an undifferentiated whole. Consequently, one of his major concerns was to eliminate the impression of the haptic plane, and this he did in his work even early in his career, sometimes to extremes. But he (and with him all of his contemporaries in Holland) gradually came to realize that when the figures in a painting are allowed to recede conspicuously in space at varying depths, the viewer's attention becomes too narrowly fixed on the solid objects in the image. A much better solution, one that actually does far more to achieve the desired goal of connecting the objects with the free space into an undifferentiated whole, is to see that those figures or objects are connected within the picture plane, as long as the intervals between the figures are not made to look like a flat relief surface but are instead clearly rendered as freely circulating areas of atmosphere.

These are the reasons why Rembrandt, toward the end of the 1640s, came to appreciate the advantages of optical symmetry as a principle of composition. The following discussion of *The Staalmeesters* [*The Syndics of the Drapers' Guild*] will give us plenty of opportunity to return to this crucial aspect of the artist's evolution.

"The Staalmeesters"

Rembrandt's fourth group portrait, painted in the last decade of his life, is a regent group portrait. One wonders, quite rightly, why he took so long to address this theme. How could it be that such a versatile artist, who otherwise never tired of finding solutions for the artistic problems posed by every conceivable type of painting, did not take up a theme that had grown steadily in popularity since his youth, and which held out the promise of rich rewards from wealthy men eager to be portrayed? There is only one explanation: Rembrandt simply had no interest in the theme. After all, it was little more than the tedious and monotonous rendering of a few men who, in their position as members of the governing body of one kind of charitable organization or another, turned with expressions of benign goodwill toward an unseen party located in the viewer's space.

Now, depicting figures with expressions of sympathetic attentiveness was something of a specialty for Rembrandt; nevertheless, he was not interested in a theme so narrow that it consisted of nothing but recording individual expressions of compassion. In my opinion, we come very close to the deepest nerve of Rembrandt's artistic volition when we begin to appreciate, firstly, that the production of a straightforward group portrait in which the figures are coordinated merely by their expressions of attentiveness held no interest for him, and, secondly, that in his sketches he was always searching for the heart of the dramatic conflict that would allow him to subordinate his figures. He was able to find that necessary conflict in the theme of the anatomy lesson,

which, superficially at any rate, is quite a sensational one (simply by virtue of the corpse which Rembrandt, in contrast to de Keyser, did not omit), and subsequently in civic guard group portraits, but apparently not at first in the philanthropic deliberations of regents. Then, when he finally did decide to paint a regent group portrait, its subject was not to be the governors of a charitable institution, but the board of directors of a mercantile company.

The Staalmeesters, no. 1247 [RM no. SK-C-6] in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 54), which according to signature and date was painted in 1661 and 1662, depicts the directors of the same honorable clothmakers company that, already in Aert Pietersz.'s day, had commissioned the earliest known regent group portrait (see fig. 32) and thus begun the evolution in Amsterdam. These people were not involved in performing altruistic acts of charity, but in promoting the self-serving common interests of the members of the guild. Naturally, in keeping with the Germanic tradition of justice and equity, this attitude also carried over to the party outside the painting, and it is this type of external coherence that gave Rembrandt the opportunity to perfect the expression of that element of pictorial conception that was the national theme of Holland, namely, the figures' look of sympathetic attentiveness.

In the corner of a room, five regents appear as half-length figures seated around a table; behind them, a servant stands against the wall. The one in the middle is obviously the spokesman, the presiding officer to whom the other men are subordinate. But there is nothing else about him that underscores his higher status: no physical attributes of the kind that allows us immediately to recognize Dr. Tulp and Captain Frans Banning Cock as significant players. He exercises a subordinating effect exclusively because he is the only one who is actually speaking, literally forming words, that is, the means for expression and connection of his inner experience. What he is saying clearly has something to do with the contents of the open book before him, perhaps concerning a regulation of some sort. A flick of the right thumb accompanies this speech, while the rest of his hand rests peacefully on the book. He is not looking directly out toward the viewer, but upward, off to the left side: it is clear that he is speaking primarily to his colleagues, even if what he says may also pertain to the party occupying the space of the viewer, whom, to judge from the direction of the gazes of the other regents and from the low vantage point, we assume to be in a central position somewhat lower down.

From the way in which the speaker is handled, it is clear that the attention of the spokesman's colleagues is at least partly directed to what is being said. However, these fellow regents are all looking out at the viewer, that is to say, in the direction of the other party (which, to judge from the various angles of their glances, here as elsewhere, should not be thought of as limited to a single individual). Moreover, they look out with expressions full of expectation — with a touch of self-awareness that, while by no means intense enough to be considered pathos, nevertheless does lend the painting considerable "interest." The servant by the wall in the background, on the other hand, represents the neutral form of pure attentiveness.

Fig. 54. Rembrandt
The Staalmeesters
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

What we have just done is give a lengthy description of what the viewer quickly recognizes and clearly comprehends as a self-contained dramatic scene involving five or six portrait heads, even though the means for expressing it are much less obvious than in the much earlier Valckert. Bürger-Thoré was the first to describe the dramatic content. Above all, he correctly presumed the presence of an unseen party in the space of the viewer, with whom the syndics are negotiating. The presiding officer is presenting the guild's position — with which the party in question presumably disagrees — in such a superior and cogent way that his colleagues, the moment they hear his convincing argument, gaze triumphantly at their humbled opponent. This interpretation is no doubt broadly correct, though Thoré, as a Frenchman, overly dramatized the situation and invented an all too sharply polemical contrast between the regents and the presumed party. To a dispassionate observer, the expressions of the figures and the general mood of didactic attentiveness probably convey more a feeling of contentment and assent than malicious satisfaction and schadenfreude.

In his *Staalmeesters,* Rembrandt seems to have found the solution to the problem of group portraiture in Holland: all the figures in the painting enjoy a convincing internal coherence because of their subordination to the spokesman, while at the same time the figures' subordination to the viewer ensures a satisfying external coherence. In a way typical of Holland, this subordination is compensated in that, although the speaker's colleagues are listening to their spokesman, they also assert their independence from his dominant position by sharing their attention with the other party at the same time. Furthermore, they maintain their autonomy in the face of the potentially dominant role of the viewer (the other party) by revealing a self-awareness that is, however, not the suffering variety associated with the Fleming van Dyck and his strong Romanist leanings or with the Roman Bernini, but more akin to the assertive and confident sense of pleasure associated with the Fleming Rubens and his weaker Romanist influence or with the Haarlem painter Hals.

As a result, the ideal of group portraiture in Holland seems to have been attained: the figures charged with establishing internal coherence are the same ones responsible for external coherence, which is now perfectly specific in time and space. Just how specific it is can be conveniently gauged in a comparison with Valckert's regent group portrait of 1624 (fig. 40). Valckert had the spokesman address the viewer directly, so that the painting represents two moments of time which, even though they follow in quick succession, are still distinct from each other: first, the moment when the spokesman asks the question, followed by the moment in which the spokesman's colleagues anticipate the answer. Rembrandt united both phases in a single unit of time by showing the spokesman oriented to his colleagues and not to the viewer. This creates a situation in which the fellow syndics can, in one and the same moment, convincingly absorb what their presiding officer is saying, while directing some of their energies toward the party.

The pictorial conception of Rembrandt's *Staalmeesters* represents in a

certain sense the final point of the evolution in Holland. Having understood this, we no longer have to puzzle about why the artist was so preoccupied with subordination and internal coherence from the very beginning of his career. He saw them as the means of introducing oppositions into the pictorial conception, which would then enrich the content of the painting as a whole. Because, however, he chose kinds of oppositions that cancel each other out, in the end he used the Italian devices of subordination and internal coherence but in order to achieve that universal goal of the artistic volition of Holland: coordinated relationships both within and outside of the painting.

Of course, Rembrandt achieved this goal only at the end of his career in *The Staalmeesters*. In the course of his long struggle to attain it, there were many times when it looked as though Holland's demand for external coherence with the viewing subject became secondary. In fact, however, this continued to be his sole and ultimate concern, and he turned to the internal coherence of antique and Romance art as a model only because he knew it would lead him to the perfect solution for Holland. *The Staalmeesters* is conclusive proof of this, for while internal coherence is completely and convincingly expressed, the hard-won internal coherence is clearly of secondary, subservient interest. It is nothing more than the precondition for the external coherence that was unquestionably the artist's main concern and the main source of the enormous artistic effect of the painting.

Totally unified internal and external coherence is also the source of what causes the compelling effect of *The Staalmeesters* on the viewer, namely, its unprecedented, purely psychological intensity. The latter results from the double measure of attentiveness exhibited by the regents as they simultaneously take in the words of the spokesman and gauge their effects on the party. Moreover, physical activity is kept to a minimum, only enough to make clear what is going on and to vary the figures somewhat as necessary. One hand of each of the five syndics is visible; however, only the spokesman actually forms a gesture with thumb and index finger, while the hands of the others do nothing in particular. The man getting up from his chair is marking a place in a book with his left hand, but his hand is wearing an olive-colored glove to make the gesture as inconspicuous as possible. Rembrandt's major concern was to focus on the attentiveness that is subtly individualized by the sitters' self-awareness, on the one hand, while heightening it to the utmost extent, on the other. What results is a sense of extraordinary life that glows from within these half-length portraits and becomes richer and deeper the more time spent closely studying them.

There is no longer an apostrophe (that is, subordination) to the viewer, as was still the case with the uppermost surgeon in *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp,* and, again, with the captain in *The Night Watch* who is stretching out his left hand. *The Staalmeesters* does not rely on a loud, attention-getting device to assure contact with the viewer.

It is very quiet; the words seem to drop like gentle rain. The longer we, as viewing subjects, study the image, the more acutely we become aware of the

inner tensions reverberating within the minds of these four individuals. That touch of self-esteem in each of the heads shines through the general state of selfless attentiveness that forms part of the world soul, and the modern viewer will observe each head intimately and choose the one with the most nuances and the most to say. The one that intrigues me the most is the second from the left, who has just stood up and is leaning forward as though to get a better view of the unseen party. I am convinced that Rembrandt invested so much in his interpretation of this particular face because the figure's striking physical movement sets him apart from the others.

As far as the composition is concerned, the figures nestle so gently into the surrounding free space that it looks at first glance as though we are dealing with a completely modern, subjective spatial composition, an impression that the unusually low (subjective) viewpoint seems to confirm.[49] One attentive look at the servant, however, is enough to convince us that the spatial relationships are still not completely resolved by modern standards; in other words, they do not truly conform to subjective visual experience. Consequently, even in his latest work, Rembrandt still did not think of a figure group as a unified whole seen from the point of view of a solitary subjective viewer.[50]

The most striking thing is that the table no longer functions as a spatial center, as it had since Barendsz. and even in Rembrandt's early works, such as *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*. It is true that as early as Eliasz.'s painting of 1628, the front side of the table is empty, though the narrow sides are still clearly occupied. What Rembrandt does in *The Staalmeesters,* by contrast, is to place the table at such a height and such an angle (one imagines that it is elevated on a platform of some sort) that its surface recedes out of sight. This arrangement makes it look as though the five regents are all occupying the same plane, even though two of them are, in fact, positioned at the ends of the table. In *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp,* the surgeons form a wedge-shaped mass projecting diagonally into the foreground that is barely kept within a plane by means of a steep pyramid. In *The Night Watch,* furthermore, the guardsmen start to unfold more regularly within the picture plane but break forward at the ends and in the center into projecting solid cubic masses. In *The Staalmeesters,* by contrast, Rembrandt returns to the most rudimentary form of row arrangement within the picture plane.

The three regents in the middle of the composition form a triangular shape within the planar arrangement that is, however, missing its apex, and therefore most of its subordinating power. The two figures on either end function as vertical axes that calmly contain the concentric movement within the central group. This is one of Rembrandt's familiar compositional principles that we have already observed in *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* and in *The Night Watch,* namely, that all physical movement should change into calm observation as one moves toward the periphery of the group. The calm, vertical stance of the servant functions in the same way as one moves toward the rear. Another similarity between the composition of *The Staalmeesters* and that of *The Night Watch* is the way Rembrandt has inserted a middle-ground

plane of space extending purely in one direction — laterally — along the entire width of the painting between two other layers of space made up of components that project (though only moderately) toward the viewer. All three layers of space in *The Night Watch* are, however, made up of figures; in *The Staalmeesters,* this is true only of the middle ground. Otherwise, the foreground layer is taken up by the obliquely placed table, and the background by the projection and recession of the paneled wall.

Rembrandt's strong emphasis on cubic solids in his early paintings, which is abandoned in favor of a planar arrangement, plays exactly the same role in the evolution of his composition as internal coherence does in the evolution of his pictorial conception: both were merely means to an end. The best way to understand Rembrandt's compositional principles is through his rendering of the individual figure, since, the relationship of the parts of a human body to the whole figure is basically analogous to that between multiple figures and the composition as a whole.

The simplest way to hinder any understanding of his compositional principles is to assume that Rembrandt was trying to render visual phenomena in a modern way, as momentary, subjective, optical sensations of color. One ought never to forget that Rembrandt lived in the Baroque age, and that he sought a solution to the artistic problems he shared with other Baroque artists, which was not yet a thoroughgoing subjectivism, but simply the triumph of the subjective over the objective. So, for Rembrandt, external objects continued to possess an objective form that he wished to expose, but certainly not eliminate, by means of a hardness that appealed to the sense of touch. Simply put, for him as well as for all the other artists of the Baroque age, objectivity was a given; differences in interpretation between Southerners and Northerners were merely a matter of degree.

Rembrandt, as we know, was concentrating on how to unify solid objects with the free spaces around them, but to a certain extent he also conceived of these free spaces as shapes in themselves that simply happened to lack any hard, tangible quality. Rembrandt's artistic intention from the very start was to find a way of transferring the optically soft quality of "atmospheric form," if I may call it that, to the solid objects in his paintings.

Now, a look at Rembrandt's portrait heads throughout his whole long creative life shows very clearly that, even though the faces steadily take on a softer, looser, and spongier quality, they also stand out more in relief. This seems like a contradiction from the modern standpoint; nevertheless, the heads in *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* are flatter than the ones in *The Night Watch,* which, in turn, are less convincingly sculptural than the physiognomy of *The Staalmeesters.* The self-portraits document this process best: it is hard to believe that the same person who painted the aged Rembrandt as a bloated yet optically brilliant reflection was also responsible for the comparatively flat and polychrome-monochrome portraits of his youth.

As time passed, Rembrandt increasingly played down the impression of a tangible plane that is still evident in his youthful self-portraits. He does this by

emphasizing relief, that is to say, the quality of solid cubic space. It is possible, at least for a moment, to mistake this means to an end for an end in itself. As soon as he knew he had total control over the rendering of sculptural form, he stopped relying on other physical devices to convey a cubic quality. Instead, he became much more concerned with making sure that the surfaces of his figures had optical (as opposed to tangible) qualities that make them look as though they are seen from a distance. This idea of rendering things as though seen from afar, when done systematically, is the basis of our modern, subjectivized approach to visual phenomena.

Rembrandt's multifigural compositions undergo exactly the same kind of evolution. Over and over again in his compositions of the 1630s, we find the same kind of compact, diagonally projecting mass of figures familiar to us from *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*. In *The Night Watch*, he was already so adept at rendering volumes that he could allow himself to play with the way the members of the main mass of figures seem to leap out in three dimensions. Nevertheless, *The Night Watch* already shows signs of a gradual transition to a more tranquil planar composition. By the 1650s planar composition becomes so dominant that it can no longer be overlooked.

Because planar composition with its connective diagonal lines plays such a fundamental role in the art of the Romance peoples, however, it might appear as though Rembrandt were influenced by them in this regard. This possibility troubled Carl Neumann to such an extent that he came up with the rationalization that Rembrandt adopted the Italian linear approach not because he thought so highly of it, but because he thought so little of it. Now, Rembrandt was surely the last person to become involved in something that he thought little of, so Neumann's argument cries for emendation. The argument is easily righted: the planar composition of the late Rembrandt is not the haptic linear composition of the Italians, which is intended to give a tangible sense of connection among figures moving apart in space. Rather, Rembrandt developed an optic spatial composition that gives figures moving at different depths the tranquillity of appearing to belong to a single plane, just as they would be seen from a great distance. We see clearly that the syndics are arranged within a plane; we are, however, also acutely aware that they are meant to be surrounded by free space. This plane is an optic and subjective one, not the haptic and objective one of the Italians—even though, admittedly, the two means of expression overlap to a certain extent. I have already, on pages 279 f., discussed the roots of the new compositional approach that Rembrandt adopted in the pictorial conception of his later work.

The same desire to suppress those conspicuous physical qualities of objects that keep them isolated from each other is also at the root of all the other aspects of the composition of *The Staalmeesters* that make it different from the earlier works. It is what made Rembrandt abandon exaggerated chiaroscuro and begin to place more value on local color without, however, creating a polychromatic and isolating effect that would have disturbed the subtle intermingling of figure and free space. Has a Persian rug ever been painted as

astonishingly and convincingly as this one, with its shimmer of red on the narrow end of the table? Rembrandt has rendered the side view of the dyed threads so that the viewer can distinguish between the part of the wool deep down in the pile that retains a richer, deeper color and the tips of the knotted strands that are discolored and have faded into a dirty brown. Because the viewpoint is so low, the surface of the table is out of sight, and this automatically eliminates the distracting assortment of objects, such as writing materials and the like, that still clutter up the table in Valckert's work. And what a small space Rembrandt has allotted here, especially compared to the vast and vague dimensions of the vaulted room in *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* and the unfathomable depths of the round-arched gate in *The Night Watch*! This clearly proves that, from the very beginning of his career, Rembrandt had one unshakable goal for his composition. It was not simply to increase deep recession per se — though it often seems so in his earlier paintings — but rather to connect it with the human figure and the self-contained individual form in the most homogeneous way possible.

Let me summarize Rembrandt's artistic volition in a sentence: Rembrandt exploited subordination in a painting as a means of coordinating the figures among themselves (on a psychological level) and with their surrounding space (in a physical sense). Subordination for him was exclusively a source of dramatic opposition, and this is primarily what puts him in a special category with respect to all genres of painting in Holland. No other artist from Holland can compete with him in this respect, and that is why he has no equal as far as modern opinion is concerned. French and Germans alike universally agree that this greatest of the Romanists in seventeenth-century Holland most completely fulfills Holland's own specific artistic tendencies.

Every other area of Rembrandt's creative activity underwent the same sort of transformation in pictorial conception and composition that we have just observed taking place between *The Night Watch* and *The Staalmeesters*. Obviously, we are not in a position to prove this in exhaustive detail here, anymore than for earlier conclusions of a general nature (pp. 273 ff.). As before, a few examples will have to serve to dispel any doubts about the plausibility of generalizing these remarks.

An etching signed by Rembrandt and dated 1640 shows the beheading of John the Baptist (fig. 55; Bartsch 92). The pictorial conception is not as developed as that of *The Night Watch*, because separate individuals are still responsible for internal and external coherence, respectively. In the foreground, we find the self-contained action of the beheading itself, and behind it the cause of the action, the captain who has ordered the execution (or Herod himself?). This time, this figure shares his function to a certain extent with a second person, namely, Salome.

In spite of this, as others have noted (Neumann, *Rembrandt* [see note 61], 282), we see immediately that the conception of the etching is closely related to that of *The Night Watch*, primarily because the lighting of the main figures automatically makes them dominate the darker, subordinated clump of spec-

tators. In this case, however, three figures are involved: the Baptist and his executioner united in their own subgroup, plus the young Moor on the right side, holding the platter and waiting for the execution to take place. These three subordinate the other figures in the painting to themselves just as the captain and the lieutenant do in *The Night Watch*. The passive Moor takes on the role of the lieutenant, whereas the function of the captain is still divided between two persons (in keeping with the already observed differentiation between figures in charge of internal and external coherence), one of whom is subordinated to the other.

Of all the figures in the etching, the Moorish boy is obviously the one upon whom Rembrandt lavished his whole-hearted artistic attention. The expression of attentive waiting is caught perfectly in the boy's face and body, as well as in the way he is readying the platter. Rembrandt intended for all the figures to have basically the same expression of attentiveness, whether it be the Baptist with his look of submission, or the executioner's business-like demeanor as he raises his hands, the agents of the action, to eye level to get his bearings for a well-calculated blow. As a result, what engages the viewer's attention is more the warning to "watch out" for the action than the action itself. That is also true of the crowd of spectators who swarm expectantly out of the dark city gate into the light and of the half-visible heads emerging from the open windows.

To appreciate Rembrandt's interpretation, one need only imagine how Rubens or any Italian Baroque artist would have handled the reactions of figures like these in the moments before an executioner's sword hits the mark: some of them would look frightened or cry out; they would, at any rate, be in a visible state of agitation, while the rest would swagger about mockingly, exhibiting their contempt. All in all, these other artists would have undertaken to represent a whole range of emotions, from the painful to the pleasurable, whereas the faces of Rembrandt's figures all have essentially the same neutral expressions of expectation. This is Holland's typical pictorial conception in the pure form that only Rembrandt succeeded in perfecting, albeit without the subtle refinements in emotion that become characteristic of his work only in the later stage represented by *The Staalmeesters*.

A pen-and-ink drawing with wash in the Albertina (fig. 57), at least ten years later than the etching, documents this later stage. The strict division between the figure in charge of internal coherence and the one responsible for external coherence has already disappeared, and the main actors and onlookers are coordinated to have the same status. Moreover, just as Rembrandt made the spokesman in *The Staalmeesters* the most insignificant figure in the painting, he decided not to allow much prominence to the main action that gives the sketch its title, namely, the beheading of the Baptist. The saint is kneeling with averted head. Not only that, but the raised arm of the executioner obscures his own face, so that the viewer is prevented from seeing what is arguably the most interesting aspect. For this same reason, the physical aspects of both main actors have also lost a lot of their objective quality and

moved farther into the subjective realm of the viewer. On the one hand, this is because some parts are blocked from view, particularly the facial features; on the other, it is a function of the soft, loose treatment of the contours and the phenomena of movement that they suggest.[51] The onlookers do the opposite and react openly with a rich variety of expressions that, in this instance, include not only tense attentiveness but also deep compassion. Even here, Rembrandt did not pass up the opportunity to include a key figure in the group; however, this individual is now almost completely coordinated with the other onlookers.

Let us compare the compositions of the two execution scenes. In the etching of 1640, we find that, though the background gradually flattens out optically, the foreground is broken up into obvious recessive units. This relationship is analogous to that between the illuminated main figures and the darker crowd of figures that functions as a backdrop. The composition of the drawing in the Albertina, however, has no hint of cubic solids that could function as a spatial center and no trace of clearly defined pockets of space. The figures stand partly aligned with a plane that is parallel to the viewer, partly in a row perpendicular to it that recedes into space, an arrangement that is repeated in countless compositions produced by the artist in the early 1650s. The two figures who, by virtue of the action, are meant to subordinate all the others appear to be completely surrounded by atmosphere and enveloped by free space, which reduces their autonomy and whatever prominence they might have had (at the same time that it enhances the impression that they are integrated with the surrounding space). The interior space, in spite of the sketchiness of the execution, is clearly indicated. The dark areas of space that accumulate in the corners have completely lost the unfathomable depth they still had in Rembrandt's anatomy lesson of 1632.

To conclude, I would like to take a theme and make a rapid comparative overview of all three stages of evolution represented in Rembrandt's group portraits. I have chosen the theme of the Circumcision, one that Rembrandt apparently felt drawn to, because he came back to it again and again over a long period of time, presumably because of its deep symbolic significance.

At the beginning of the evolution is the etching Bartsch 48, dating from 1631 (fig. 56). In the background, the high priest is the representative of the synagogue, and thus also the one responsible for external coherence, since the introduction of the newborn child to the synagogue is the cause of the action. In the foreground, the protagonists form part of the internal coherence, along with the circle of attentive onlookers involved. Compositionally, the altar functions as a diagonally placed, projecting spatial center around which the figures are arranged along diagonal ground lines. Strong contrasts of light and dark intentionally work against any junction of figures within a plane. On the other hand, the free spaces manifest themselves as dark areas of indeterminate depth with, as yet, no real connection with the figures.

In the drawing in the Berlin Museum (Lippmann, *Drawings* [see note 48], no. 19), done in 1644, the high priest no longer bears responsibility for the
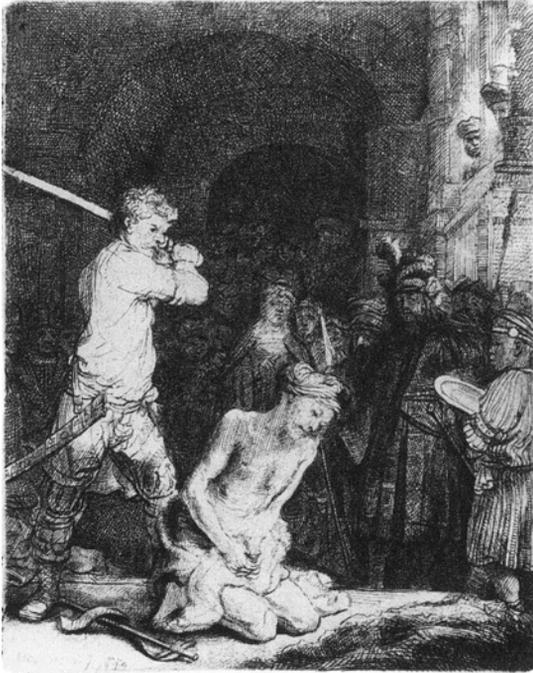
Fig. 55. Rembrandt
The Beheading of John the Baptist
Etching, dated 1640 (Bartsch 92)
Vienna, Albertina

Fig. 56. Rembrandt
The Circumcision
Etching (Bartsch 48)
Vienna, Albertina

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Fig. 57. Rembrandt
The Beheading of John the Baptist
Pen and ink with wash
Vienna, Albertina

external coherence. His place is taken by the priest performing the circumcision, who is rendered in a distinctive way that promotes him to the prominent position of the captain in *The Night Watch*. Opposite him, the parents take up the passive role of the lieutenant. The onlookers gradually begin to break loose from the uniform crowd of subsidiary characters and regain a certain amount of autonomy. Their attentiveness slowly becomes more participatory. The composition still consists of a spatial center set on an angle around which the figures are grouped. The spaces between them are becoming larger and airier, thus preparing the way for the optic, planar effect. The formerly strong contrasts of light and dark are giving way to softer transitions.

In the etching of 1654 (fig. 58; Bartsch 47), the priest in charge of the action is stripped of his dominant role. All the figures in the painting are coordinated, their attentiveness focused on the inconspicuous child. The figures are already presenting themselves to the viewer in a compositional arrangement within a plane. Although it is rendered by means of haptic, linear relationships, it is also transformed into an optical phenomenon by the spaces circulating between the figures. An artificial-looking ray of light cuts through the atmosphere and across the figures. It does not, however, pretend to any objective validity, like that once possessed by the nimbus and the halo, but openly admits its subjective origin and claim to validity, rather as symmetry does in recent painting.

Bartholomeus van der Helst

Most of Rembrandt's contemporaries in Amsterdam would probably not have understood the forces at work in his painting. They would not have recognized that he adopted the Romance device of subordination, and the dramatic tension that goes along with it, only because it allowed him to make figures in perfect conformity with the artistic intentions of the Hollanders, that is to say, figures capable of maintaining autonomy, while being perfectly coordinated on a psychological level. The same applies to his dark manner of painting, which was nothing more than his solution for assuring perfect coordination between the figures and free space. They saw only the aspects of Rembrandt's work that on the surface seemed atypical of Holland.

The time was ripe for an artist who could topple Rembrandt from the position as the foremost group portrait painter in Holland that he had enjoyed since his completion of *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* in 1632. This artist had to be someone willing to comply with the contemporary demand for a certain amount of subordination — just enough for a mild degree of internal coherence — but who would not be inclined to take it to extremes. Bartholomeus van der Helst was such an artist, and the painting with which he made his debut was a civic guard group portrait of the company of Captain Roelof Bicker and Lieutenant Jan Michelsz. Blauw from 1643, Rijksmuseum no. 477 [RM no. SK-C-375] (fig. 59). Van der Helst obviously meant his group portrait to be a pointed criticism of *The Night Watch*, as its pictorial conception and composition continuously play off aspects of the earlier work.

Fig. 58. Rembrandt
The Circumcision
Etching, dated 1654 (Bartsch 47)
Vienna, Albertina

The Company of Captain Roelof Bicker and
Lieutenant Jan Michelsz. Blauw

In this painting, van der Helst set out to demonstrate that he could paint a group portrait that would capture all the figures in a momentary action and would feature the captain prominently in the center of the composition, but without subordinating the men either to the action or to the captain and thereby risking their autonomy. He wanted, further, to show the men engaged in various activities of the moment—some of which overlap with those in *The Night Watch*—but without the specific action looking like a fragment as a consequence of the effort to make the overall effect lifelike.

The action that establishes the internal coherence of the painting—and that functions the same way as the order to march in *The Night Watch*—is not a command but a greeting exchanged by the second and third officers: the lieutenant and the standard-bearer. The lieutenant heads a part of the company that has just returned from shooting practice and is arriving from the left at the gathering place before a tavern. The other members of the company, headed by the standard-bearer, have been passing the time awaiting their colleagues' arrival by drinking beer. Van der Helst chose to depict the moment when both groups are about to come together, separated by only a few feet. The welcoming gesture of the two officers embodies the psychological link between the two groups. Nevertheless, hardly any of the many men involved pay any attention whatsoever to the greeting exchanged by their superiors. All of them are content to fall in with their own little group and do nothing to disturb the internal coherence.

The captain is standing directly behind the lieutenant in the exact center of the painting, completely frontal in respect to the viewer, whom he is scrutinizing from a somewhat elevated position. His superior air and critical demeanor leave no doubt about his opinion of himself as the first and foremost of the men. His clothing is light, that of the figures to either side of him dark; the lieutenant to his right is dressed in black. A Moorish boy on the left, acting as servant, is carrying his coat.

It is hard to avoid speculating that van der Helst's decision to keep this figure light, and to place it between two dark ones, was made in response to the reverse situation in Rembrandt's work, where the dark captain is placed between two light areas. Moreover, van der Helst may also have meant the Moorish footboy as a kind of admonition to Rembrandt about the greater propriety of placing a servant in that subordinate position rather than a lieutenant. The man behind the captain, firing off his musket, is another who has a direct predecessor in *The Night Watch*. Rembrandt, however, obscured the figure so that we had a hard time piecing him together; in fact, we never found the most important feature, namely, his face. Van der Helst, on the other hand, made a point of presenting his guardsman very clearly, taking pains to turn his face toward the viewer. Furthermore, the boy inserted into the group of adults on the left provides us with another parallel—and a corrective to the fairy-tale girl in *The Night Watch*. His droll little figure holds no mystery for anyone.

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Fig. 59. Bartholomeus van der Helst
Company of Captain Roelof Bicker and Lieutenant Jan
Michelsz. Blauw, dated 1643
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Fig. 60. Bartholomeus van der Helst
The Civic Guard Banquet to Celebrate the Peace
of Westphalia
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

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Once again, however, external coherence is established by directing the figures' attentiveness toward the viewer; in this case, at least half of the men in the portrait are involved. Van der Helst even reverted to the old-fashioned device of subordinating the viewer physically by showing a few of the men engaged in varieties of gesturing: first, there is the guardsman clad in black on the left who points with his finger; then the one on the right seated on a keg of beer—surely the most engaging of them all—who is holding up his empty beer glass; finally, there is a man standing on the stairs brandishing a sword, either to greet or indicate someone.

The painting undeniably has its good points, foremost among them one that the commissioners of the portrait will have appreciated: the convincing physical likenesses of the individual portrait heads, but for Rembrandt that would have amounted to little more than a springboard for further psychological exploration. Even modern viewers who spend hours transfixed studying *The Night Watch* will find it something of a relief to come to van der Helst's portrait, because they will not be expected to extricate the figures painstakingly from the spatial shadow or to subject their physiognomy to major character analysis. Van der Helst's guardsmen are simply open books, to be read at a glance. The colors here are neither bleached into light color values nor dimmed into shadows. The men's clothing does not cater to extravagant tastes and is meant to be seen for its own sake—for, after all, "The clothes make the man." One would have to look far to find silky satin material and tassels and gold lace, peacock feathers and top boots that are painted as well as these! Everything is excellent in itself, and the harmony of the overall effect, the internal coherence, is undisturbed. But that is all! Nothing further grabs the viewer's imagination and makes the scene a coherent whole.

The figures are aligned vertically in the manner of old Holland; the faces, even when they are not staring out directly at the viewer, show minimal variation in direction. The few who take up unusual positions have obviously been borrowed from elsewhere. This is true of the guardsman on the right-hand side who is offering his colleague a sip of beer from his glass, as well as for his partner who has solemnly placed his right hand on his chest: both are taken from one of Hals's banquet scenes. The snappily dressed guardsman in the right foreground is a particularly good example: for this figure, van der Helst was presumably inspired by the standard-bearer in Hals's *Meager Company*. A comparison of the two immediately brings out the inevitable shortcoming of any copy: the motif becomes weaker. The defiant expression on the face of Hals's standard-bearer is simultaneously good-natured and full of humor; he clearly gives us to understand that he is above that which he is parodying, quite aware that "All is vanity." His successor in van der Helst's work, however, is deadly earnest. He has none of the engaging humor of Hals's figure and would almost seem flashy to the point of ridiculousness were it not for the irresistible splendor of the way the facial features, the clothing, and the chic accessories are painted.

The composition, too, betrays the fact that van der Helst was consciously

competing with *The Night Watch*. To be sure, it was Thomas de Keyser who first introduced the element of free space into the friezelike arrangement of the figures. In 1632, he set up the figures in such a way that they project in a wedge shape into the foreground, leaving two empty areas on either side in the corners. Then, in 1633, where the figures are divided up into three groups, de Keyser left a narrow sliver of space between each unit. Nevertheless, Rembrandt, in *The Night Watch*, was the first artist bold enough to allow two gaping spaces to dominate the foreground. Van der Helst apparently also felt obliged to join in the trend toward exploiting free space as a component of the composition; at the same time, however, he was determined at all costs to avoid the confusing and disturbing aspects of Rembrandt's spatial gulfs. With this in mind, he created a gap somewhat right of center between the lieutenant and the standard-bearer which has a regular, rectangular shape and reveals the tavern wall. Here, the eye meets up with two figures who are sitting in front of the tavern with a poodle lying peacefully at their feet, the counterpart of the dog leaping between the legs of the guardsmen in *The Night Watch*. Above the two seated men, another member of the company leans out of an open window from the depths of an interior and greets his arriving colleagues with a full glass of beer. Hence, this is how the viewer's eye is tempted back, step by step, into the space of the painting, meeting up with one portrait, then another, each of which expects to be seen on its own terms. Moreover, the composition within a plane invites the viewer to take time examining each figure. On the right-hand side, the men are standing on a flight of stairs; however, they stand there calmly and do not crowd forward toward the viewer as in *The Night Watch*. Finally, van der Helst included a smoke-filled sky on the left-hand side over the heads of the arriving men. Because of the numerous raised lances and blasting muskets, the viewer can easily imagine that many unseen guardsmen are still streaming into the tavern yard behind their other colleagues.

"The Schuttersmaltijd" of 1648

Nevertheless, it was not the previous painting that earned van der Helst his long-lived reputation for being a serious competitor to Rembrandt, but the famous civic guard banquet portrait of 1648, now located in the Rijksmuseum, no. 467 [RM no. SK-C-2] (fig. 60). It was apparently not enough for the members of this company to be portrayed in a generalized situation that occurred time and time again in company life; this time they opted for a moment of historical import, for the kind of event that comes once only and cannot be repeated. In fact, all that stops us from classifying *The Schuttersmaltijd* as a history painting is that van der Helst treated it so obviously as a genre episode. The occasion that the Sint Joris Doelen (Guild of Saint George) chose to commemorate in its group portrait was the signing of the Peace of Westphalia. Specifically, the members commissioned van der Helst to portray the moment when the two officers, Captain Cornelis Witsen and Lieutenant Jan van Waveren, congratulate each other and mark the joyful event with a

drink to renew the vows of brotherhood. One could hardly think of a way of celebrating a historical event that would be more typical of Holland.

The captain and the lieutenant are the ones who set the tone for the large gathering. Because the captain is the one proposing the toast, he puts the lieutenant in a somewhat subordinate position. Nevertheless, how much more autonomy van der Helst's Lieutenant van Waveren has than the diminutive Lieutenant van Ruytenburgh in *The Night Watch*! More important, however, is that, aside from these two, not one of the other banqueters shows any concern for the toast drunk by their superiors, even though that was presumably the reason for their coming together in the first place. Here and there, pairs of individuals interact with each other, but most of the men focus their attention on a distant and indeterminable point outside the painting. Only a few of them look directly toward the viewer, but they include the standard-bearer in the center, along with several guardsmen in the left-hand corner—the men, that is, who enjoy prominent placement in the painting. They, of course, are the ones in charge of the external coherence, and, compared to the painting of 1643, there are far fewer of them. We can conclude that since that work van der Helst had decided to go along with the trend of the times toward greater internal coherence. The increase in subordination that we observed earlier is another confirmation of this. All in all, a proper assessment of this painting depends very largely upon the fact that van der Helst and Rembrandt essentially had identical goals, in spite of the superficial differences between their major works, and, moreover, that these are differences of degree rather than of kind.

Earlier, we discovered that the typical pictorial conception of Haarlem was one that puts the figures in the smaller genre episodes in charge of creating internal coherence and the other figures in contact with the viewer in charge of creating external coherence. We will see this again shortly in Hals's paintings. Van der Helst was clearly concerned that relying too much on subordination to establish internal coherence would be unpopular in Amsterdam, so he no doubt found it more prudent to return to the solution preferred by his counterparts in Haarlem. He even chose to incorporate specific motifs from Hals along the way, as we saw in the painting of 1643.

On the surface, the painting of 1648 represents an even more decisive swing in the direction of Haarlem. The genre motif of the banquet had remained the favorite of group portrait painters in Haarlem ever since Cornelis Cornelisz.'s pioneering use of it in 1583, and Hals's civic guard banquet scenes have retained an almost proverbial reputation up to the present day. However, this motif, which does not lend itself to the kind of strict subordination associated with the act of giving orders, but which, on the contrary, ensures its banqueters the greatest amount of individual freedom, had gradually begun to lose favor in Haarlem by the 1630s. At the same time, it began to make an appearance in Amsterdam, where it appealed to the growing forces that were reacting against Rembrandt and his overemphasis on subordination, precisely because it provided the artist with a situation that naturally led to a coordinated

arrangement. Furthermore, when a banquet scene is treated like a genre episode, and each of the participants is shown to be primarily engrossed in fortifying himself alone, then the haphazard way in which the guardsmen look and move is not disturbing. In other words, the lack of internal coherence, which had meanwhile become desirable in a group portrait, albeit within bounds, is not felt as such. However, one ought not overlook the fact that the coordination here is very superficial, and it is accompanied by an example of subordination that makes this banquet scene by van der Helst radically different in a very essential way from those of Hals. Like the guardsmen in *The Night Watch* who are starting to march, van der Helst's confused mass of banqueters is only meant to function as a neutral, subordinate background for the main action which, in this case, comprises firstly the toast between the captain and the lieutenant; secondly, the scene with the similar toasting motif on the left; and, finally, the standard-bearer's act of presenting himself in the middle of the painting. It would therefore be a mistake to measure van der Helst's painting by Hals's standards, because the comparison will always fall to the disadvantage of the former. Van der Helst's guardsmen are not sufficiently absorbed in their carousing and joking with each other, and are far too engrossed in their own attentiveness. Next to Hals's jolly types, they look rather dour.

The composition differs from that of the painting of 1643 in two ways: it has a more severely symmetrical, subordinated arrangement and reveals a decrease in chiaroscuro in favor of brighter illumination and local color. Once again, a comparison with the work of Hals is the most effective way of gaining insight into van der Helst's artistic intentions. Hals painted a civic guard group portrait in 1627 (fig. 69) that van der Helst may have looked at for his civic guard banquet of 1648. It is the only work in which Hals located the figures in a well-lit interior and arranged them in a comparatively strict symmetrical way. The center of the composition is kept low, but then it rises on either side along the diagonals created by the heads of the figures, although he ingeniously relates the figures to each other by interweaving the diagonals resulting from their contrapposto positions.[52] In the Hals, all the members take up about the same amount of space, and even the figure in the center of the composition does not demand any special concessions. In the van de Helst, on the other hand, the symmetrical arrangement is dominated by five figures, all of whom are positioned on the long side of the table that faces the viewer. In comparison to the row of men behind them, they take up a lot more room. Furthermore, van der Helst has left large empty spaces between them, so that the standard-bearer looks like the dominant center of the composition. In addition to these five main figures, other objects in the foreground are treated in a highly sculptural way—the drum in the middle, the cooler on the left side, and the guardsman standing on the right—so that they extend into the foreground, right up to the front edge. As a result, the viewer is much more acutely conscious of the pictorial space here than in the earlier painting. At the same time, the more strictly symmetrical arrangement around a center ensures

a more tranquil integration within a plane. Van der Helst's decision to combine a more highly sculptural treatment of the figures with a reemphasis on planar composition once again confirms how close this artist was to the late phase of Rembrandt's work. This affinity is also clear in van der Helst's choice—unusual for him—of diagonals and contrapposto positions in the middle of the composition, to the right and left of the standard-bearer, which then settle down into peaceful verticality toward the corners.

Significantly, after the Peace of Westphalia, commissions for large civic guard group portraits where all the members are present disappear almost completely, to be replaced by portraits of officers alone. These aristocratic regent portraits eventually crowd out the democratic civic guard group portraits. Earlier, we traced the history of the regent portrait to the point where, at the end of the second period, Valckert and Eliasz. had managed to establish external coherence. Then, our discussion of Rembrandt brought us to the conclusion of the third period that witnessed the perfect integration of internal and external coherence, the goal of the evolution that had begun in the 1630s. The next natural step was partly to disrupt the external coherence by introducing elements to strengthen internal coherence. For example, in Govert Flinck's *Regents of the Kloveniersdoelen* of 1642 (fig. 62), we see several men gazing out toward the imagined applicant, while the others are having a discussion. However, the hand gesture of at least one of the men among the discussants indicates that the regents responsible for internal coherence have taken notice of the presence of the applicant, and that they therefore, indirectly, have a connection with the colleagues in charge of external coherence. This solution is very close to that used by Rembrandt in his *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* of 1632. Van der Helst painted several regent group portaits in the 1650s that are very characteristic of Rembrandt's approach.

The Regents of the Sint Sebastiandoelen of 1653

The earliest of these works is a group portrait of the regents of the Sint Sebastiandoelen (of the crossbowmen's guild) of 1653, now in the Rijksmuseum, no. 468 [RM no. SK-C-3] (fig. 61). Several things point to the fact that, even at this late date, it was still a problem for artists like van der Helst to establish good internal coherence. For example, he allowed only one of the four regents to turn and look out of the painting, leaving the other three free to interact with each other. Moreover, the regent who turns his head is not even focusing directly at the viewer, who is thought of as standing at a lower vantage point; the dog in the left-hand corner does it for him. This unresolved problem also manifests itself in the need van der Helst apparently felt to include physical objects that reinforce internal coherence by displaying various precious items from the guild's treasury.

This is enough to show that van der Helst placed unusual emphasis on the material aspects of the painting's conception as a means of expressing the psychological level of the regents' existence, in other words, to their attentiveness. He treats the composition in an analogous way, by providing the viewer
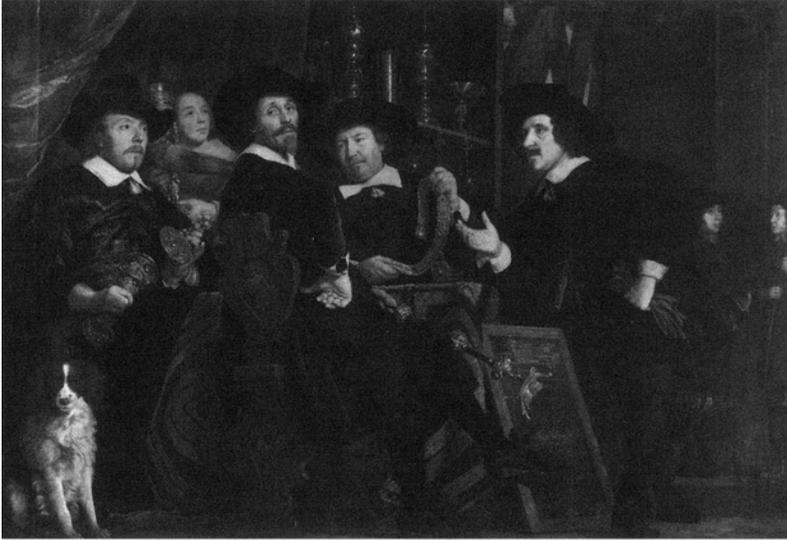
Fig. 61. Bartholomeus van der Helst
The Regents of the Sint Sebastiansdoelen, 1653
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Fig. 62. Govert Flinck
The Regents of the Kloveniersdoelen, 1642
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

with a range of explicit, concrete clues about the existence of free space. There is no mistaking that everything in the picture is arranged diagonally, at an angle to the ground; this applies to the grouping of the figures as well as to the walls defining the interior. For example, let us take the lines that connect the four guildsmen: they create a rectangle whose corners are pivoted at an angle, a situation clearly underscored by the slate propped up at their feet. We discover the same pattern in the way the walls of the interior — that on the left, with its shelves and magnificent tableware; that on the right with its pattern of boards — meet in the background to form an acute angle.

On the other hand, however, the viewpoint is very low, so that the table-top slants down toward the background, as it does later in the painting *The Staalmeesters*, and disappears from the viewer's field of vision. This signals, for one thing, a complete break with the bird's-eye perspective found in ancient and medieval art, where figures situated behind each other in space are all rendered as flat shapes on the same even, opaque background. It also points, however, to a conception of space that is familiar to us from *The Staalmeesters*, where the three-dimensional qualities of the spatial center (the surface of the table) are suppressed in favor of reestablishing the impression of a plane. But this new planar preference has nothing to do with its antique predecessor, which was of a haptic, objective nature, but is meant to be understood in terms of the optic, subjective qualities of things seen from a distance that have lost their tangible qualities because their relative depth can no longer be accurately gauged. Van der Helst had thus set the direction for the whole of Holland a full eight years before Rembrandt painted *The Staalmeesters*. The diagonal arrangement of the figures and the angle of the walls still largely outweigh the impression of the subjective single plane, which allies itself with external coherence. Indeed, the artist even included two idle figures in the background in order to define as triangular the space in which they stand.

What is noteworthy about van der Helst's handling of the men who are conversing at the table, who are the source of the internal coherence, is the sophisticated way he has managed to avoid a strictly subordinate arrangement. Although only one of the four men is shown speaking, only one of the other three is actually subordinating himself to the speaker in a passive way. He is the individual sitting on the opposite end of the table, whose bearing and expression, together with the curtain draped behind his head, make him the most distinguished of all the men, indicating to us that he is most likely the commanding officer of the group. Therefore, the active and the passive figures balance each other out. The neighbor to the right of the speaking regent also acts to subordinate the officer, and only the last regent, the one turned toward the viewer, is able to demonstrate, by virtue of his position alone, quite clearly how much autonomy he enjoys with respect to his colleagues.

So, it seems that van der Helst's artistic intentions in these three of his most important group portraits[53] can best be defined in negative terms. He did his utmost not to introduce anything dramatic into the pictorial conception

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and not to allow the composition to develop any sort of close connection between figures and surrounding free space: the two major objectives of Rembrandt's artistic volition. Now, even van der Helst recognized that the introduction of internal coherence was necessary to achieve a stronger external coherence in time and space. But he thought he could get away with a minimum of internal coherence, and that is why in the end his solution (like de Keyser's early ones) looks as though it came from Haarlem.

This solution is, however, closer to those used in the earlier Haarlem group portraits, such as those of Hals in the 1620s. In the period van der Helst was active, the artists of Haarlem, as we shall see, had already begun to abandon the earlier conception and to paint as the artists of Amsterdam had done at an earlier stage. In general, the artists in each city were trying to improve the particular aspect of the group portrait that, respectively, each of them had neglected earlier: in the case of Amsterdam, that meant internal coherence, and in the case of Haarlem, external coherence.

Van der Helst's group portraits differ in a very definite way from those produced in Haarlem in the 1650s, which, as we shall see, were in the nature of novellas. That is because his paintings, including the late works, lack the relaxed calm of a conversation piece, even more than they lack drama. It is not easy to find a positive way of labeling the niche that van der Helst carved out for himself in group portraiture. The pictorial conception of his regent portrait of 1653 (fig. 61) lies somewhere between a drama and a novella but cannot be defined as either one. Because van der Helst frowned upon anything dramatic in his group portraits, he also denied himself the benefit of the element that brought the artistic volition of Holland to the pinnacle of its reputation. Still, it is precisely van der Helst's reserve that now makes his work seem so typical of Holland, at least his earlier portraits up through the 1650s, more so than those of any other painters from the Amsterdam of his era. If we have no reservations about calling Rembrandt one of the greatest artists of all times, then we should have no trouble conceding to van der Helst the status of one of Holland's great masters.

The Rise of the Academic Style

Van der Helst's guardsmen in his banquet portrait of 1648 were the first we have encountered whose conspicuous display of fine and sumptuous clothing makes them look vain and self-complacent.[54] Vanity is the archenemy of humor, which constantly reminds us of the superficiality of life.[55] Vanity is not a trait typical of Holland, because the Hollanders spurned the notion of self-isolation, which is implicit in self-conceit; fortunately, it crops up in van der Helst's group portraits only in details of dress, not in the physiognomy itself. The faces in both of his civic guard group portraits still have friendly, congenial expressions, full of the kind of attentiveness that establishes connections. Even the showy Captain Bicker of 1643 (fig. 59) is obviously not so pleased with himself as he would like to appear.

In the 1660s, however, van der Helst did paint portraits of individuals

whose physiognomy and whole bearing, in addition to their dress, suggest the pathos of distance (a tormented urge for isolation) usually associated with van Dyck. In this respect, the artist surely felt pressured into following the trend of the times, even though it went against his own artistic inclinations. And this may be the clue that explains the awkward fact that van der Helst, though he was a favored rival of Rembrandt, ended his life in financial circumstances not much better than those of his colleague. Because he was trying to do something that went against his grain, he apparently could not compete successfully with the artists who were more in touch with demands of the advanced evolution: he shared the same fate as Hals after the 1640s or Jacob van Ruysdael after the 1670s. Art historians generally refer to this new course of evolution as the Academic style. With his obvious reluctance to embrace this new direction, van der Helst was, of course, not the man to introduce it into group portraiture. That was left to Rembrandt's most talented pupils in Amsterdam, especially to Govert Flinck and Ferdinand Bol.

The intense interest that modern observers from Northern Europe generally have in the painting of Holland's Baroque period usually starts to wane by the beginning of the Academic period. That is because the latter represents, from the Northern point of view, a reversion to standards that had long been a thing of the past, and because its Romance origins make it appear alien and retrograde in the North. Art historians, moreover, have so far blindly fallen into line and followed this general assessment of the educated majority; as a result, there is scarcely any other period in the history of art about which we know and appreciate so little, in spite of an abundance of research material, as we do about painting in Holland in the last third of the seventeenth century.

The time is surely not far distant when we can begin to look at this period dispassionately and discover that the allegedly reactionary move in a questionable direction rests merely in the choice of a few devices and not in its fundamental goal which was, as always, an inherently progressive one. Let us recall the larger forces at work at the time: a long transition was taking place between the Baroque pictorial conception of the seventeenth century, which understood figures and free space (human beings and the objects around them) to be a homogeneous unit, and the modern standpoint, which considers figures and free space to be projections of the subjective self. Between these two poles, there had to be an intermediate step which, of necessity, involved intensely focusing on the individual human figure as such, divorced from its environment and freed of all entanglements with its surroundings.

This reexamination, which went on to be characteristic of the art of the eighteenth century in particular — the period of sentimentality and "Sturm und Drang" — was initiated by the Academic style in the middle of the seventeenth century. From this perspective alone, it is clear that the Academic direction in painting was not fundamentally a throwback to the old objectivity, but, on the contrary, a bold venture into the increasingly subjectivist future that would come to dominate the entire subsequent evolution of modern art. And that is why the desire to replace the Hollanders' traditional inclination to

integrate figures with the new urge to isolate them does not fall into the category of emphasis on physical isolation that is familiar from ancient Near Eastern art, or even the physical-psychological sort practiced by the classical Greeks and the Renaissance Italians, but is purely psychological. Even in this last phase of Holland's national style, attentiveness remains, as always, the main subject of every depiction.

In the sixteenth century, however, attentiveness had been expressed in a general way; in the first half of the seventeenth century, it became more individualized, that is, directed toward a specific object. In the second half of the century, the attentiveness of the figures again became disconnected from specific objects outside the painting; however, it did not revert to being generalized, but began to focus reflexively on the individual subject. To make this attentiveness turned back on the subject seem as individual as possible, Academic artists, particularly in the beginning, turned to emotion in the form of pathos. As a matter of fact, they did so with such regularity that proponents of the materialistic interpretation of art history have earmarked them as imitators of Antonie van Dyck. The pathos of van Dyck's figures appears grand even to someone who is not particularly fond of pathos in general, especially when compared to the kind exhibited by Bol's or van der Helst's sitters, who are never able completely to hide the fact that they are basically well-meaning Northerners at peace with themselves and the world. And it is easy to understand how this glaring inner contradiction that plays itself out in the figures of these Hollandish epigones became the main reason that their portraits and paintings have generally been ignored.

The most convincing proof that the Academic style was fueled by an internal evolution in the painting of Holland, and thus not the result of outside forces, is the fact that it did not suddenly abandon group portraiture but cultivated it, albeit exclusively in the form of regent portraits and anatomy lessons. Anyone who has ever had the opportunity to glance through Herman Riegel's list of surviving regent portraits (op. cit. [p. 100], 155 ff.) will surely have been astonished to note that far more than half of the paintings that appear there date from later than *The Staalmeesters*. It seems only reasonable to conclude, therefore, that a history of group portraiture in Holland would also have to examine the internal evolution during this phase that was so rich in masterpieces. If I choose not to do so, it is not simply for the very human reason that it is difficult to imagine finding a public anywhere today willing to read the results of such a study, which promises to be long-winded. I also have a valid scholarly reason for not pursuing this topic, and that is because the pictorial conception of the group portraits of the later Academic period already resembles too closely that of the modern period (inartistic and primarily challenged by photography) which grows directly out of it. So, that is why I would like to limit myself exclusively to a quick sketch of the beginnings of Academic group portrait painting as practiced by artists who originally favored a dramatic interpretation.

Govert Flinck

Govert Flinck's painting from 1642, no. 365 [RM no. SK-C-370] in the Rijks-
museum (fig. 62), portrays four officers of the Kloveniersdoelen plus a servant.
It documents how the commissioning of civic guard group portraiture had
already begun to transform into regent portraiture six years before the signing
of the Peace of Westphalia. This aspect alone makes it historically important.
The men portrayed are the commanding officers of the Kloveniersdoelen, and
yet they behave in a very peaceful manner that shows no traces of warlike activ-
ity or even symbolic weapons. The direction in which painting was develop-
ing was compatible with this situation: the artists' newly acquired interest in
delving into the intimate, psychological level of their figures made them natu-
rally favor the restricted number of figures in a regent portrait, as well as the
relative lack of movement.

In the very same year that Rembrandt painted *The Night Watch,* we find
the pictorial conception of his pupil strenuously avoiding that painting's more
strict subordination. Two of the men interact and establish the internal coher-
ence which, because both of them are speaking, is coordinated. Only the
servant stands passively by. The attentiveness of the other two regents con-
nects them with the viewer outside the painting. The bridge between these
inner and outer relationships is spanned by the individual seated on the right-
hand side who is turned to speak to his neighbor but at the same time is point-
ing toward the viewer with his right hand. The internal coherence of the
painting is based roughly on the idea that the man sitting behind the table
was just about to make a few remarks about the drinking horn brought in by
the servant, when his neighbor on the left alerted him to the presence of an
invisible participant located in the viewer's space, whom the two other regents
have already turned to observe.

There is just enough of a touch of dramatic conflict between the two inter-
acting men to suggest a certain basic kinship with Rembrandt's pictorial con-
ception. However, two things about Flinck's portrait lead us to suspect that he
is not rigorously pursuing his teacher's quest to unify internal and external
coherence: firstly, the way Flinck divides attentiveness into inner and outer
relationships, and secondly, the tendency to avoid any degree of subordination.
The composition follows a similar pattern. On the one hand, Flinck's strong use
of chiaroscuro marks him as a pupil of Rembrandt; on the other, his blossom-
ing Academic tendencies are evident in his unmistakable preference for local
color and in his choice of a curtain (in the upper right-hand corner) as an easy
way of creating the illusion of space through the simple device of overlapping.

These tendencies are far more pronounced in his civic guard group portrait
of 1648, no. 362 [AHM no. A 7318] in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 63). Like van
der Helst's large *Schuttersmaltijd,* Flinck's painting was meant to commemo-
rate a *schuttersvreugdefest* (civic guard celebration) that accompanied the end
of the thirty-year-long war which, for Holland, meant an end to a period of
destruction and devastation, and the beginnings of peace and prosperity. Here
is another instance where the internal coherence of the figures in the painting

is based on the interaction between their superior officers. Instead of having these higher-ranking men propose a toast, however, Flinck showed them greeting each other.

The theme, of course, was not new, and is familiar to us from van der Helst's first group portrait of 1643 (fig. 59) as the motivation behind the internal coherence. Whereas in van der Helst's work the lieutenant and the standard-bearer appear in profile, striding toward each other within a plane, their counterparts in Flinck's painting are walking directly out toward the viewer, their torsos frontal, with only their heads turned toward each other. This arrangement makes an awkward impression on the modern viewer: it looks too forced, too stylized and unnatural, for it only makes sense that when two people are supposed to be coming together for the sole purpose of greeting each other, they should be shown actually approaching one another physically. The captain's position is especially formalized: it almost looks as though he is about to exit left. The way the lieutenant is standing is somewhat more amenable, and he doffs his hat with more of a sweep.

The sight of these two protagonists will remind a modern viewer of actors poised at the edge of the stage facing their audience, reciting their lines, and acknowledging each other with little more than a half or a full turn of the head. They do this, of course, for the benefit of the audience, and the same appears to be the case in the pictorial conception of Flinck's civic guard group portrait. Once again, we find ourselves confronted by a new relationship between the subject (the individual human being) and the object (the surrounding environment), and it was left to the Academic style to give it an adequate artistic expression.

Baroque art is sometimes characterized, not only by lay observers but also by temperamental art historians, as the representation of a deliberate lie. This does it a gross injustice: Baroque artists were not hypocrites. Irrespective of origin, whether from the North or the South, they were simply and openly owning up to the dualism that plagued the pictorial conception of their paintings. The criticism against them is that they make their work look as though they were totally unaware of the viewer, while at the same time consciously arranging everything for the spectator's benefit. In fact, however, Baroque artists announced clearly enough that they composed with a viewer in mind, but they did feel that they were also under obligation to take into account the objective qualities of things. This open admission to the juxtaposition of the objective and subjective aspects of their paintings is surely not hypocrisy but rather a confession of dualism.

For example, to acknowledge his awareness of the viewer in *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* of 1632, Rembrandt used the figure of the surgeon farthest back in the picture space, though he also had the other physicians bonded into perfect internal coherence. In his *Staalmeesters,* acknowledgment of the viewer's presence is more straightforward and, because of the perfect integration of internal and external coherence, all the more convincing. It was only in *The Night Watch* that Rembrandt used primarily the figures' movements
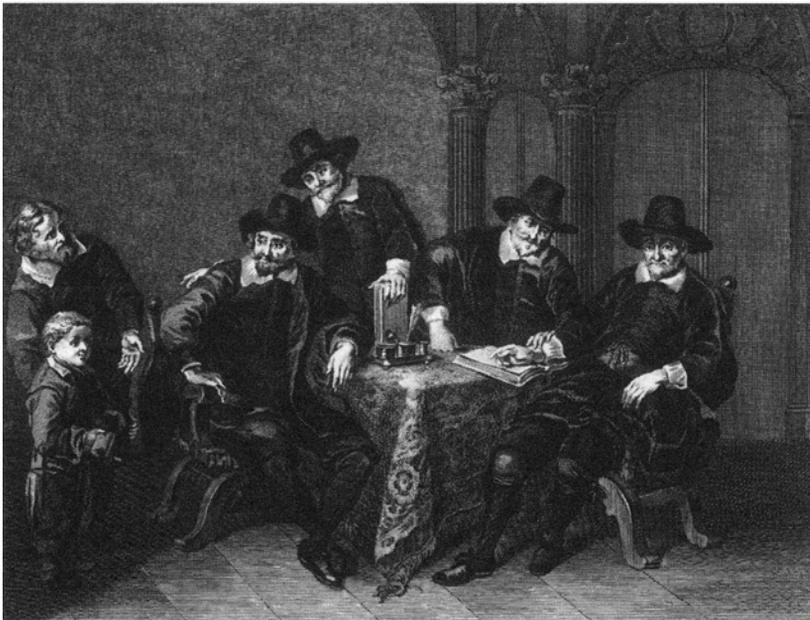
Fig. 63. Govert Flinck
The Festive Meeting of the Company of
Captain Jan Huydecoper van Maarsseveen to
Celebrate the Peace of Westphalia
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Fig. 64. Ferdinand Bol
The Regents of the Leper Hospital, 1649
Engraving by Reinier Vinkeles, 1769
Original in the Amsterdam City Hall

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directly toward the viewer to signal this awareness. The modern viewer rarely misses this bit of theatricality — particularly on the part of the captain, though also of the lieutenant — which is, however, toned down by the psychological depth, on the one hand, and by the aspects of the composition that draw the eye back into the optical plane, on the other.

Rembrandt, as we have seen, did not take the idea any farther. His pupil Flinck, however, in his civic guard group portrait of 1648, chose to acknowledge the presence of the observer more pointedly. Though relying on exactly the same device as the one Rembrandt used in *The Night Watch,* he deliberately pushed it in the direction of the conventional "deception." Of course, Northern artists had no knack for exploiting such theatrical possibilities; for the French, however, this was grist for their mill, and a grand opportunity that suited their temperament and led them on to become the dominant artistic force in Europe for the next two hundred years.

What are the other participants in Flinck's scene doing? It is surely unreasonable to expect them to take any lively interest in the exchange that forms the basis of the internal coherence, given that the two leaders are behaving in such a reserved manner toward each other. And, as a matter of fact, hardly a single one of them wastes so much as a glimpse on the two saluting men. Now, van der Helst's guardsmen of 1643 are also not inclined to take much notice of the welcoming gestures between their officers, but they are at least participating in the moment by showing their good spirits. Flinck's men, on the other hand, are glancing about distractedly; a few of them even look out at the viewer. In other words, they look like people who know very well that a conventional ceremony is going on, one in which they themselves are expected to play no active role.

The way Flinck handled external coherence shows him to be a true native son of Amsterdam, for he still felt compelled to accentuate it as much as possible: to this purpose, he included a seated guardsman in the lower right-hand corner who, much like the surgeon in the background of Rembrandt's anatomy lesson of 1632, directs the viewer's attention with a point of his finger to the source of the internal coherence. Two other guardsmen are also looking directly out at the observer: the standard-bearer and a second, outlandish figure to his right who is fiddling with his top boot. The Hollander in Flinck is especially evident in this particular figure. Positioned prominently just left of center, it seems to the modern way of thinking to be the product of poor taste. What on earth, one wonders, could the artist possibly have been thinking when, in the midst of the dignified, "official" posturing of the three officers, he unabashedly inserted the figure of a man who apparently had nothing better to do than adjust his footwear? The answer is simply that he intended that very effect. This uninhibited guardsman was meant to dispel any notion that the viewer was faced with a history painting, that is, the depiction of a purely objective event. Rather, Flinck wanted the painting to be seen clearly as a genre scene, whose ordinary subject matter would be comfortably familiar to any viewer's subjective experience.

The Academic pictorial conception, which from this point on became the basis for the group portrait as a whole, naturally began to affect the individual figures as well. The attentiveness they express ceases to be primarily of the soulful type and begins to be more aloof. The earlier attitude of open accessibility is replaced by an unmistakable preference for keeping one's distance. Surely, the Italianate pride, as captured in the portraits of van Dyck and others, was influential in this change; the Hollanders may even have persuaded themselves that they now shared in this feeling. They could not change their nature, however, and they were only deceiving themselves if they thought they could.

Now, an integral part of that nature was a certain impulse toward self-isolation that stemmed from the widespread Germanic tradition of individualism, one that evolved in Holland to an especially intense degree. This time-honored reserve of the Hollanders did not, however, arise from a sense of superiority, but from a sense of respect for others. The neutral, dispassionate attentiveness that we find in the paintings of Geertgen and even still in those of Dirk Jacobsz. is not the kind where the figures categorically refuse to have anything to do with each other, but simply the kind where they hesitate to burden their peers with their willingness to communicate. This form of isolation, so typical of old Holland, is a matter of having respect for another person's private sphere, which naturally went along with the expectation that one's own privacy would be respected in return. On the other hand, the sitters in the portraits of van Dyck, Titian, and Velázquez always demand control over the viewer and, for that matter, over everyone else. Even van Dyck's figures, with their pathos-filled expressions, turn inward only because they sense that their power is failing. No matter what type of pictorial conception Romance or even Romanist artists choose, they will always assume that the figures involved are motivated by an aggressive will to dominate. In contrast, the expressions on Flinck's faces lack any trace of true grandeur. His men go through the motions of behaving like rulers, but they are neither able nor really willing to be the masters of other people. All they really want is to be their own masters.[56]

The way Flinck set up the relationship between the picture space and the picture plane has affinities with the composition of *The Night Watch*: for example, the way the space is hollowed out here and there, the effect of the lances, the insertion of figures moving within the plane between the men who are marching out of the painting (such as the guardsman discussed above, who stood out because of the genrelike nature of his action). Nevertheless, it is significant that the background is played down, returning to its function as necessary space filler between the figures. At the same time, the cloud-filled sky, cursorily indicated though it may be, has gained in size and significance, reminding us, once more, of van Dyck, Velázquez, and other Romance and Romanist artists of the seventeenth century.

Ferdinand Bol

Ferdinand Bol was the only one of Rembrandt's pupils who shared the same high degree of interest in dramatizing group portraits, at least at the start of his career. This surely explains why their works are often mistaken for each other's. As late as 1649 — by which time Flinck, as we have seen, had already resolutely joined the camp of the Academicians — Bol produced a painting that the Rembrandt-enthusiast Thoré praised as one of the most splendid works of Dutch painting. Located at the moment in the mayor's office of Amsterdam City Hall, it depicts the regents of the leper hospital as full-length figures (fig. 64).[57]

The appearance of the work makes it obvious that Bol was also intent on solving the problem of unifying internal and external coherence in his group portrait. He cut the Gordian knot, as it were, by simply introducing into the painting the figure that had previously always remained unseen outside the painting.[58]

A child disfigured by leprosy is led in by an adult and warmly received by the regents, two of whom turn with obvious sympathy (pathos-filled attentiveness) toward the unfortunate youth, while the third regent alerts the fourth to the arrival of the applicant. It is only this last regent who turns to look pensively at the viewer.[59] Therefore, out of a total of six figures, four are bound together in tightly knit internal coherence, three of whom are subordinated to the fourth (the child). Then there is the third regent, who is at least loosely connected to the group relationship. That gives the last regent on the right-hand side a special status: to judge from his gaze, and even more so from the expression on his face, he is the one in charge of external coherence. Compared to Rembrandt's work, the lively physical movement here makes Bol's painting much more dramatic than, for example, *The Staalmeesters*. However, Bol has still not truly found the perfect solution for integrating the inner and outer relationships of his group portrait.

He had much more success in this regard in a group portrait of the three regentesses of the leper hospital, no. 142 [RM no. SK-C-367] in the Rijksmuseum, signed but not dated, though it must have been produced in the early 1650s (fig. 65). One of them, to judge from her arm movements, is having a lively conversation with the applicant, leaning forward in a way that brings her right up to the picture surface. One of her colleagues is listening to what she has to say, while the third regentess is observing the effect that these words are having on the viewer. We have here some measure of integration in the internal and external coherence; moreover, the kind of subordination utilized by Bol is completely in the spirit of Rembrandt. Nevertheless, the two passive participants are still expected to focus their attentiveness on only one aspect, whereas all the syndics in *The Staalmeesters* are able to do two things at once: both listen to the speaker and gaze out at the viewer. So, even Bol was not able to unite both relationships completely; he was not even bold enough to allow any two of the women to share the same kind of attentiveness. On the other hand, the address to the viewer is still blatant, which makes it

impossible for the sort of subtle mood to develop that is familiar to us from *The Staalmeesters*. The type of pictorial conception practiced by Bol appealed very much to the artists working in Haarlem in the late period, and we encounter it repeatedly in the group portrait painting produced there in the 1650s and 1660s, for example, in the late regent pieces of Hals.

The individual features of these three regentesses already show faint traces of the Academic style, even though Bol did not embrace it quite as enthusiastically as Flinck. However, these traces become very definite in a painting of the regents of the Huiszittenhuis from 1657, no. 141 [RM no. SK-C-436] in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 66). At first glance, the six gentlemen seem to be suspended in the same kind of spacelessness and timelessness that we associate with the earliest civic guard group portraits from the sixteenth century. But a closer look reveals that some of them are behaving in a way that indicates they are definitely interacting with each other, and, ultimately, we realize that we are expected to assume that these six people share the same space in a single moment of time. With their attentiveness, however, they seem to have retreated into themselves as much as possible. They do not open up toward anyone, either toward a colleague or the applicant (the viewer), any more than is absolutely necessary to get the idea across that they are consulting about a matter that concerns them all, namely, how to ease the suffering of their leprous charges.

So, Bol has managed to integrate internal and external coherence, but without making it too obvious to the viewer. On the contrary, the viewer is forced to carry out a full-scale psychological analysis of the painting before that integration becomes obvious. At the same time, however, it is clear that the pictorial conception of the Academic style is still much more subjective than even that of *The Staalmeesters*. The degree of closeness that the figures share with each other — at least at the stage represented by this painting of Bol's — goes hand in hand perfectly with the development of the novella-like pictorial conception practiced at this time by artists in Haarlem, which we shall encounter a little later. But what Bol's group portrait lacks in comparison to those produced in Haarlem is the subtle impression that, underneath it all, there is a lot of ribald fun going on.

A few significant things should be noted about the composition, for example, how the background wall has moved forward, closer to the figures, compared to its position in 1649. As a result, the figures of 1657 are crowded more and more into the extreme foreground, so that the viewer seems to risk being poked by the elbow of the dashing cavalier sitting in the middle of the painting. The sculptural effect of the figures is offset, however, by Bol's clear attempt to reduce the variations in depth to bring the figures into a single optical plane. In this respect, once again, Bol shares the basic intentions (though not the same means) of the mature Rembrandt.

This painting by Bol demonstrates that group portraiture in Amsterdam had already progressed beyond the stage represented by *The Staalmeesters*. Rembrandt's portrait relies on dramatic conflict and the range of human
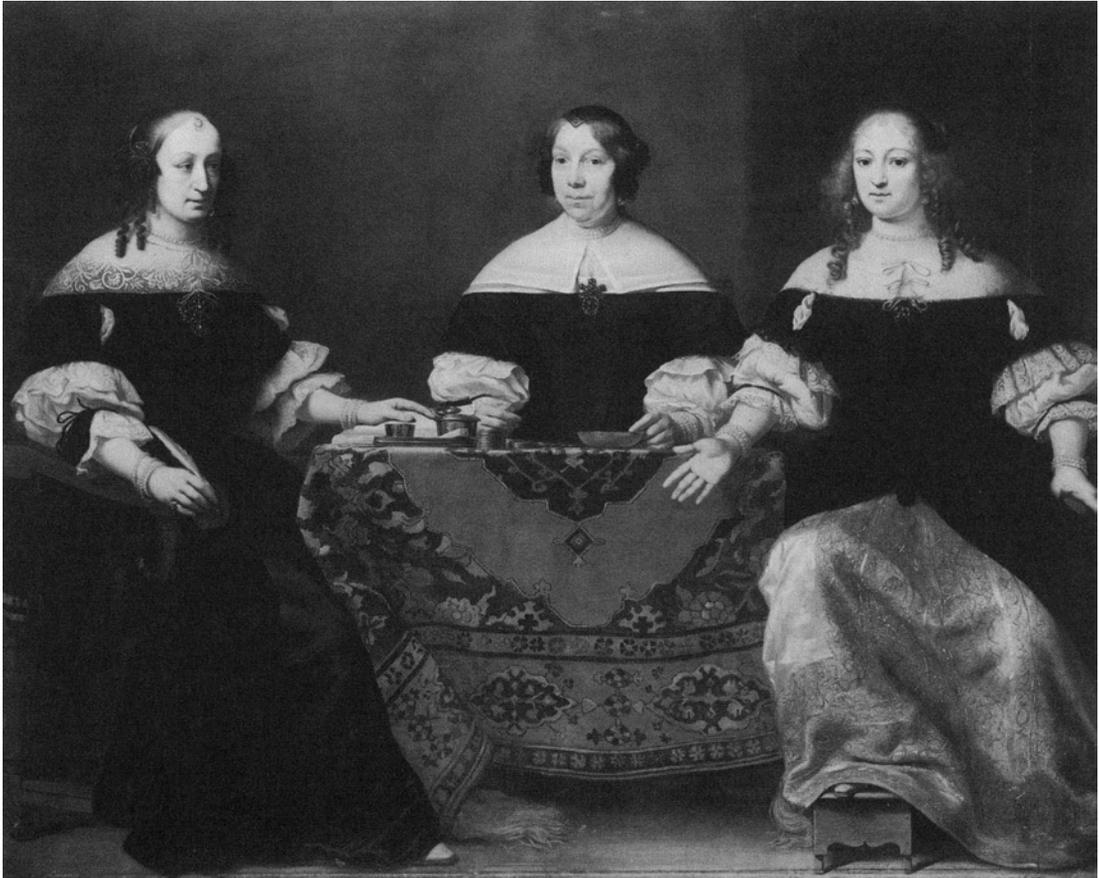
Fig. 65. Ferdinand Bol
The Regentesses of the Leper Hospital, between 1650 and 1655
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Fig. 66. Ferdinand Bol
The Regents of the Huiszittenhuis, 1657
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

emotion that goes along with it: that makes his work look outdated in its objectivism compared to the Academic subjectivism of his pupil. It is therefore no wonder that the work by Rembrandt, which we consider today to be the best and most mature fruit of the pre-Academic blossoming of art in Holland, hardly made any impression at all on his contemporaries. While Rembrandt's anatomy lesson of 1632 received lavish praise, and *The Night Watch* of 1642 much debate, there was hardly any mention at all of the regent portrait of 1662 in the literature of the period. Seen from this perspective, the explanation for the "Rembrandt problem" therefore may simply be that the artist was still searching for the perfect solution to a problem posed by a particular moment in the history of art in Holland that his fellow artists had already placed behind them. Then, by the time Rembrandt finally arrived at the perfect solution, they had lost all interest. Not until the end of the nineteenth century, after much research and reflection, did art historians finally grant Rembrandt the recognition denied him during his lifetime.

Nicolaes Maes

One last pupil deserves our attention, and that is Nicolaes Maes, whose early works have such affinity to his teacher's that for a time it was thought that his late Academic paintings must be the work of a different artist with the same name. It was, however, not the dramatic component of Rembrandt's work that Maes shared, but the elder artist's subtle way of integrating the individual figures with their surroundings. For an artist like Maes, who began with a pronounced fondness for subjective devices, it comes as no surprise that he eventually abandoned his teacher's principles in favor of the increasingly subjective approach of the Academicians. In the process, Maes gradually allowed the individual figures to reemerge from their surroundings, which naturally meant a degree of renewed reliance on local color as well. This is true not only of Maes, but of all Rembrandt's pupils who were following the same course.

From Maes's Academic period, the Rijksmuseum possesses a group portrait (no. 891 [AHM no. A 7541]) of the surgeon's guild from the years 1680–1681 (fig. 67). Its pictorial conception has the kind of tension and unity that makes it easy to spot as the work of a pupil of Rembrandt, automatically setting it apart from the mediocre level of group portraiture typically produced in Amsterdam at that time. We are left in no doubt that the six people depicted are sitting together in the same interior at the same moment, while directing their attention toward the same point located outside the painting in the space of the observer. As a result, internal and external coherence appear to be integrated—although emphasis is placed overwhelmingly on the latter, because the subordinating action that forms the basis of the internal coherence, namely, the presentation of a document to the applicant, is hardly noticeable. Overall, the result is a perfect group portrait. Individually, however, the figures have lost all their distinctive, objective qualities: their facial features are modeled on the same standardized notion of elegance, which, though it may have been very flattering to the original sitters, does not

impress the modern eye as does, for example, the vigorous physiognomy of some of Valckert's figures. The eyes and mouths, those main vehicles of expressiveness, suggest a certain degree of inner intensity, but otherwise the figures are so uniform in appearance that they lose the sense of individuality we moderns prize so highly.

The subjectivity of the eighteenth century focused on the conventional, and that is what enabled Romanist artists to be at the forefront of the evolution at that time. Modern subjectivity is individualistic, and therefore unsympathetic to the stereotyping phase that preceded it. That is why the modern mind identifies more closely with the individualized art of the first half of the seventeenth century, even though it was in large part still conceived in a traditional, objective way.

Group Portraiture in Haarlem from 1616 to 1667

The problem of internal coherence, which artists in Amsterdam did not consciously tackle until about 1630, was solved in Haarlem a half-century earlier. In Haarlem, however, the solution had not been to integrate all the figures in a painting totally, but only partially, in a number of smaller units. It was advantageous that the Mannerist artist Cornelis Cornelisz. adopted Romance elements as early as he did, because it assured the Haarlem school a special course of evolution that allowed it to maintain its own definite charm, even for the modern viewer.

There was, however, one disadvantage, for, as the subsequent evolution shows, it prevented the artists in Haarlem from perfecting internal coherence to the high level attained in the rest of Holland. This gave the artists in Amsterdam the advantage, for they had postponed dealing with internal coherence on principle, until they had satisfactorily addressed an aspect of the group portraiture of Holland that was of overriding concern, namely, perfecting an external coherence that was totally unified in time and place. They treated and developed internal coherence from the beginning as simply a way to support external coherence and then ultimately as a way to integrate it. And this is the end result we saw in Rembrandt's *Staalmeesters,* our example of the perfect integration of internal and external coherence. The developments in Haarlem, however, went in the opposite direction: having initially neglected external coherence, the artists in Haarlem ended by bringing it to the perfected stage that artists in Amsterdam had already attained by 1624.

We left off our investigation of the evolution of group portraiture in Haarlem in the year 1610. In 1599 Cornelisz. had solved the problem by dividing some figures into several self-contained units, each with its own internal coherence, while allowing individuals to take up contact with the viewer, so that external coherence is shared by several units. Some figures fix their attention on one of the other men in the painting, while others look as though they have sighted figures outside the picture space. The individual subgroups do not interact among themselves, and, in general, there is no way of telling whether any of the activities are taking place simultaneously.

Fig. 67. Nicolaes Maes
The Regents of the Surgeons' Guild of Amsterdam, 1680
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Clearly, Cornelisz.'s successor Frans Grebber already felt the need to con-
nect the figures responsible for both types of coherence, because his subgroups
have figures that are both interacting with others in the unit (internal coher-
ence) and at the same time acknowledging the presence of the viewer. This,
however, represents only half a solution that is basically identical to the one-
sided interactions of the figures produced in Amsterdam that are so awkward-
looking to modern observers.

One of the main concerns of artists in Haarlem in the next stage of group
portraiture which began after 1610 was, still, to create self-contained genre
scenes whose figures focus their attention on the viewer. The challenge then,
however, was to show that both types of activities were taking place in the
same space at the same time. And, in order to make the group as a whole look
as if it had been caught in a split second of time, as it might be observed by a
subjective viewer, the artist first had to achieve this effect with each individual
figure. Now, although Cornelisz.'s figures may no longer have disturbing signs
of dualism, the positions of their bodies are not sufficiently convincing to
enable us to say that because the figure is gazing in a particular direction, it
necessarily follows that the head tilts in a specific way, the torso and limbs in
another, and the entire figure assumes a particular position in space that could
not be otherwise. The artist to meet this double challenge was Frans Hals.

Frans Hals
As an artist from Haarlem, Hals was naturally as unconcerned about total
external coherence as he was about perfecting internal coherence. It was
enough of a solution for him that the group as a whole breaks down into
several smaller units in which the figures form several self-contained groups
that do not relate to each other, while some figures establish contact with the
viewer. Hals was very concerned, however, to make it clear that all the figures
share the same time and place. He did not force all of them to participate in a
common activity or to join in directing their attention to the viewer; on the
contrary, they should be as autonomous as possible. But there should be no
doubt that all the figures in the painting operate in a shared space in a single
moment of time. Of course, the only effective way of getting this idea across
clearly is to show the figures engaged in a common activity, either with each
other or with the viewer. And that is why, as we are about to see, Hals gradu-
ally, if reluctantly, began from the very beginning of his career to adopt first
internal coherence and finally a large degree of external coherence.

Hals left six civic guard group portraits, all of which are located in the
City Museum of Haarlem, with the exception of *The Meager Company* of
1637. Many observers consider the earliest of these to be the most successful
one. This may be because it is the most loyal to local Haarlem tradition. Later
on, the more the artist began to pick up the artistic practices of Amsterdam,
following the trend of the times and the natural evolution of things, the more
he felt obliged to go against his true nature and incorporate unfamiliar con-
ventions into his paintings. The viewer, in turn, also finds that these elements

do not really belong or go together with the rest of the picture. Therefore, generalizations about Hals's civic guard group portraits are usually based on his earliest work, depicting a banquet of the civic guard of Saint George from 1616 (fig. 68).

The Group Portrait of the Civic Guard of Saint George, 1616

At first glance, the pictorial conception of Hals's group portrait seems to be identical with that of Cornelisz.'s portrait of 1599. A compact group of banqueting guardsmen occupies the right-hand side of the painting and the foreground. They have a variety of active and passive relationships with the viewer: that is to say, with the arriving guests whom some of them have just spotted, but who are invisible to the viewer. To the left, seated behind the table, there are two groups, of two and three, respectively, whose members interact. The third man from left is speaking to the second from left, who is calmly attentive to him. The man seated in the center of the painting behind the table, presumably the captain, is about to carve the pig's head on the plate in front of him; the hand gesture of his bald neighbor draws his attention to the fact that something is going on in the space of the viewer. Meanwhile, the third man in the group, the standard-bearer, listens eagerly.

Several motifs directly borrowed from Cornelisz.'s painting of 1599 prove that Hals used it as a model: first, the two men on the extreme left have the same placement in both paintings; furthermore, the damask patterning on the part of the tablecloth cast in shadow is also the same. Nevertheless, in spite of some general and specific resemblances, the two works are worlds apart.

The first difference lies in the choice of themes to represent the internal coherence of the self-contained subgroups. Cornelisz. depicted his men swearing oaths of allegiance and brotherhood, acts that are relatively serious and have historical significance. Hals, on the other hand, chose the kind of insignificant, everyday exchanges that can happen at any dinner table, capturing the casual chatter of carousing guardsmen, while clearly distinguishing the talkers from the listeners. The second and most important difference lies, however, in the degree to which the representatives of internal and external coherence are intimately connected. For example, at the same time the bald man is speaking to the captain in a relationship of internal coherence, he is also calling the captain's attention to the presence of the viewer, that is to say, to the arriving guests outside the painting. As a result, the bald man anchors the captain, who is the main channel of external coherence, in time and space. Conversely, the man second from right, who stands with his body in a frontal position, flourishing his hat in greeting to the newcomers, has turned his head toward the captain, checking to see if he has noticed them.

The overall pictorial conception therefore establishes a genre episode unified in time and place: not just, as has recently been argued, a display of posing and posturing but a genuine, completely self-contained genre scene. The missing ingredient is supplied by postulating someone on the viewer's side of the painting whose presence, while not spelled out in the painting, is

no longer ignored but openly acknowledged. What makes this more convincing here than in his later civic guard group portraits, in which Hals increasingly tried to combine these two functions, is the way the group is broken down into two asymmetrical halves, limiting the number of men involved in both internal and external coherence to just two.

To appreciate how Hals's individual figures are conceived, one need only compare the first two left-hand figures in this work with their predecessors in Cornelisz.'s civic guard group portrait of 1599 (fig. 34). The enormous gap between the two pairs is immediately evident: Hals's figures are entirely motivated by one and the same impulse. Romance artists had long had this unity as their goal, as we have seen, while Northern painters were preoccupied with it for the entire sixteenth century; Hals was the first artist from Holland truly to perfect it. The element of the solution that is unique to Holland is that the motivation originates on the psychological level as attentiveness. What distinguishes Hals as an artist of Haarlem from his colleagues in Amsterdam is the way he combines the attentiveness used throughout Holland with emotion; however, this is not the pathos-laden variety associated with aversion, but the positive kind associated with pleasure, which is akin to an exercise of will. In this respect, Hals's artistic volition has much more in common with that of Rubens; his ability to create figures with great vitality and physical presence puts him, more than any other artist from Holland, closer to Rubens. What sets him apart from Rubens is his humor: while the figures of the Romanist Flemish artist are absorbed in their own selfish, willful pleasures, Hals's are open to sharing their high spirits with those around them. Whereas Rubens' figures betray a self-conscious, individualized joie de vivre, Hals's convivial Hollanders obviously place more value on a camaraderie of collective good humor and good nature that always wins out over self-centered individuality.

The difference in composition from other earlier group portraits of Haarlem is perhaps even more extreme. In place of the restless zigzagging of the heads in works by Cornelisz. and particularly by Grebber, there is now an incomparable calm. This is all the more remarkable given that the composition of all three is based on the very same physical arrangement: a table clearly establishing a spatial center, with figures seated on each side, which is viewed from a high vantage point so that it tilts up as it recedes in space; furthermore, the avoidance of any deep spatial voids (as can be observed particularly to right and left of the guardsman in the middle of the foreground who turns toward the viewer); finally, figures that are about the same size, with heads that all have about the same sculptural quality. What is new about Hals's overall composition is essentially the unbroken alignment of the heads which, together with the flagstaff, make up the sides of a low triangle. What accounts for this progress, therefore, is none other than a centralized, Romanist composition parallel to the picture plane. In this respect, Hals surpassed all of his Mannerist predecessors, so that, once again, it was the adoption of a Romanist artistic device that brought the painting of Holland to a new level.

The contrived alignment of the figures within a plane is echoed several

Fig. 68. Frans Hals
The Officers of the Civic Guard of Saint George, Haarlem, 1616
Haarlem, City Museum
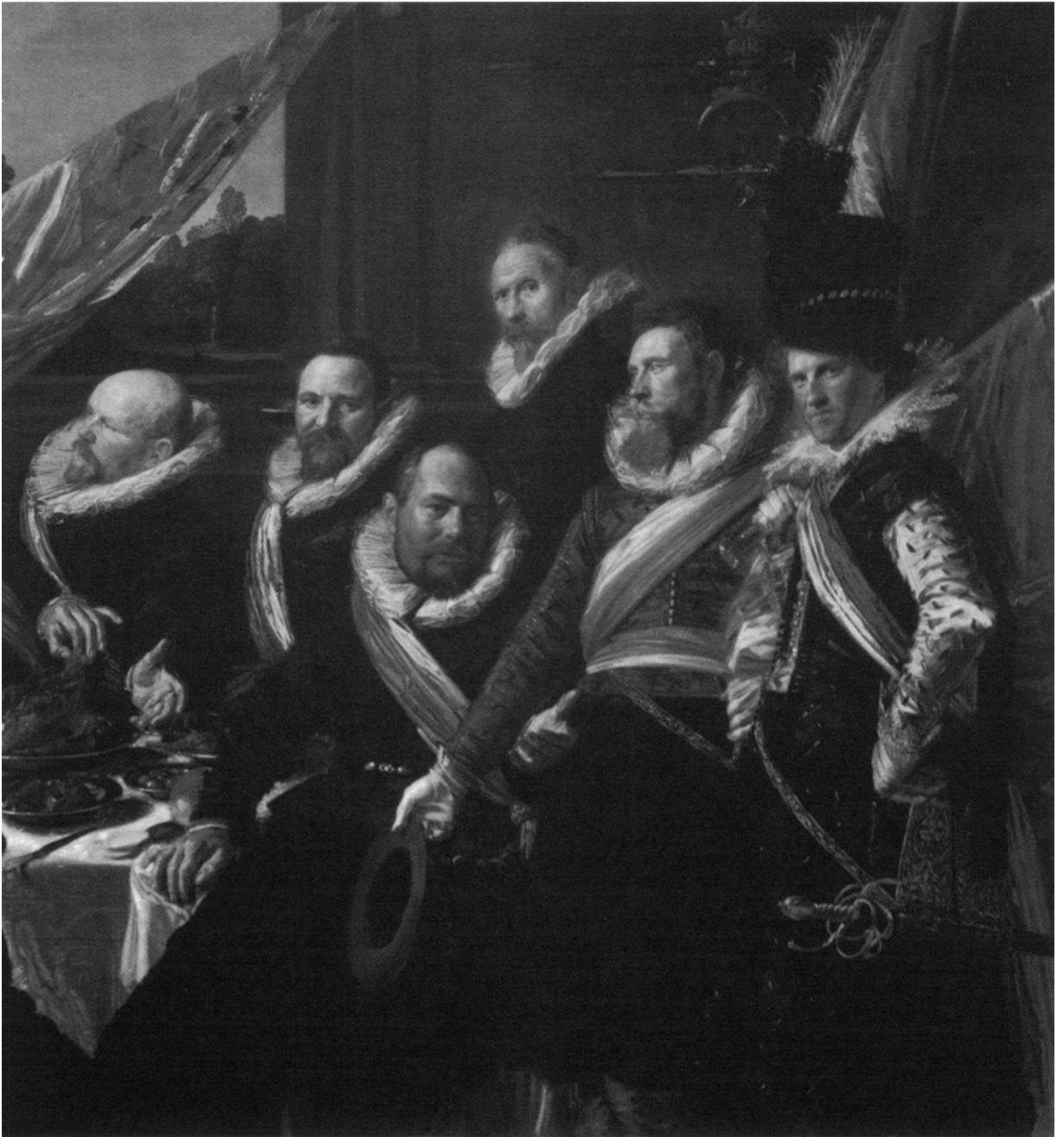
times: by the flagstaff, by the back wall with the window, and by the dark masses of foliage outside. In spite of this, there is a far greater sense of the figures feeling at home in their space than in any earlier painting. A generous amount of free space hovers over their heads, just as outside there is also an ample patch of bright sky above the trees. What creates the impression that the figures have an unprecedented freedom to move about easily in space, however, is the gradual blurring of their contours and the flickering modeling that is a combination of quickly dashed highlights and sketchy shadows. These devices create an illusion of space, tricking the modern viewer — in spite of the fact that the vantage point is unnaturally high and the figures far too crowded together — into believing that this is a subjective, optical plane rather than a tranquil, objective, haptic one. Hals's later paintings, although fundamentally closer to the modern viewpoint, leave us with a less satisfactory impression, precisely because they lack this tranquil effect within a plane. Of course, Hals's version of planar composition is not yet based, as Rembrandt's would later be, on the experience of subjective sight (optical plane) but rather on clearly defining objects within certain definite perimeters (haptic plane) as inspired by antique and Romance models.

Another characteristic of group portrait painting in Haarlem from its beginnings, like the clean distinction it made between internal and external coherence, is a lack of enthusiasm for subordination. There is never just one genre scene to generate the internal coherence but always a series of episodes: this was already the case with Cornelisz., then with Grebber, and now with Hals, who presents us with two such episodes in this work from 1616. The captain, although singled out by his dignified appearance, actions, and prominent position, is by no means playing a dominant role that subordinates the others. The men who are communicating with the viewer (that is, with the implied newcomers), however, are partly passive (subordinate) and partly active (dominant), the latter including not only the man seated on the right-hand narrow end of the table, gesturing to the invisible guests in a lively manner with his left hand,[60] but also the three or four others who are looking out in a jovial and welcoming manner in the direction of the viewer.

The composition exhibits a similar hesitation with regard to subordination. The triangle is much squatter than, for example, the one used later in Rembrandt's anatomy lesson or in de Keyser's anatomy lesson from almost exactly this period. Moreover, it is not closed off at the apex: there is a large gap between the tip of the flagstaff and the head that begins the descending line. As a result, two individuals stand out from the alignment of heads as visually more significant, namely, the one just mentioned (the third from right) and the standard-bearer. Haarlem artists' refusal on principle to rely heavily on subordination as a too harsh means of imposing unity on a painting was no doubt one of the reasons they created with such varied compositions. This same reluctance was, however, also assuredly the reason they never attained the same advanced stage that their counterparts in Amsterdam did.

The Group Portrait of the Civic Guard of Saint Hadrian
in Haarlem of 1627

In 1627 Hals painted two civic guard group portraits that differ significantly, even in their treatment of color. One of them, depicting the Saint Hadrian's guard (fig. 69), was, according to tradition, commissioned to commemorate the group's marching off to the Spanish War in 1622 and is therefore assumed to be the earlier of the two. A comparison of the two paintings from the viewpoint of the history of the evolution confirms this assumption.

What distinguishes the pictorial conception of this group portrait from that of all the others by Hals is not so much the increase in the number of individuals assigned to internal as opposed to external coherence, but mainly the extraordinary way the group is organized into little, separate genre scenes whose participants are not necessarily in close proximity, but who sometimes interact at long range from one side of the painting to the other. Moreover, the figures in long-distance relationships (two pairs) are in the background, and the more self-contained groups are in the foreground to left and right. As a result, Hals was able to create an impression of momentary hubbub and lively physical activity that is much more convincing here than in 1616. Whether this should be claimed successful from the modern standpoint is still somewhat doubtful, however, for even Hals, the artist from Holland who was closest to Rubens, was still too phlegmatic to create a genuinely convincing rendition of this type of scene. The category in which Holland's painters could claim some success at depicting such lively activities was in humorous, satirical scenes, where the immediacy of the figures' movements lends itself well to illustrating the contradiction between will and ability — as, for example, in the early paintings of peasants by Adriaen van Ostade and the lively drinking scenes by Jan Molenaer.

Not only did Hals reduce the number of figures in charge of external coherence to two, but he obviously intended their interaction with the other genre groups to be absolutely clear. Thus, the man standing on the left, momentarily doffing his hat as he glances out at us, is addressed by two seated men (one of whom, on our left, is the captain). Again, the man seated in the foreground is, to judge from the gesture of his left hand, about to make a point in discussion with the neighbor who is looking straight at him, when the arrival of newcomers causes him to turn and face the viewer. The interaction of these two men with the viewer is thus more of a passive than an active nature.

Before we go on to discuss the composition, it is necessary to get an idea of Hals's treatment of color. The painting's unusual brightness puts it in a category of its own, not only among Hals's works but also among other paintings from Holland. The use of bright colors is as atypical of Holland as the depiction of unrestrained physical activity. And, like the latter, it turns our thoughts once again to Rubens. This does not necessarily mean that Hals modeled himself directly on his counterpart in Antwerp: the animated, physical nature of the theme alone might have been enough to persuade Hals to present the officers in bright light instead of in a setting of heavy, immobilizing

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Fig. 69. Frans Hals
The Officers of the Civic Guard of Saint Hadrian, Haarlem, 1627
Haarlem, City Museum

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darkness (the dematerializing effects of which are otherwise perfect for express-
ing the psychological level of attentiveness). Figures' physical movements can
never be adequately expressed by color alone: some of their contours always
have to be clear and precise so that, as the contours change, their positioning
in space can be gauged.[61]

The figure composition, too, reflects the Romance-influenced principles of
Rubens. It forms a broken triangle with its apex downward; its sides are not
straight but curved. The lowest point, which is exactly in the middle above the
table, is not marked by a head but by a hand, or, if you will, by free space.
Even the placement of the individual figures suggests centralized symmetry.
Hals probably felt a greater need for elements that would make things cohere
within a plane because he allowed the figures to range much farther in depth
than in the painting of 1616. The table as spatial center has already become
much less visually significant; the figures no longer rise as they recede in
space; many more of them stand behind each other toward the back; and they
noticeably lose their sculptural quality, at least the ones farthest back. The left
corner of the brightly lit interior is now visible, and the foliage of the trees
beyond peers through the tall window. Nevertheless, this painting perfectly
illustrates, best of all Hals's works, how his main concern, following the
Italian-Flemish model, was primarily the depiction of the human figure, and
how uninterested he was in free space as a means to connect the figures. To
appreciate this, one need only examine the shadow falling from left in the cor-
ner of the room onto the back wall: its hard edge and uniform tone make it
look as though the wall were simply painted a darker color, and not even
remotely like a spatial shadow with its own existence. In Hals's other civic
guard group portraits, which are all darker, it is not as easy to see or appreci-
ate how the artist conceived shadow.

The Group Portrait of the Civic Guard of Saint George in Haarlem of 1627

In his other portrait of the Saint George civic guard from the same year, 1627
(fig. 70), Hals returned to a calmer pictorial conception and color treatment
that is more typical of Holland. The activity is still divided into little genre
episodes placed throughout the painting, but the crisscrossing relationships
are toned down, and the figures who are interacting with the viewer again
form a more tightly knit group. Two of the latter make a point of demon-
strating their simultaneous involvement in the feasting activities: one by turn-
ing over an empty wineglass, the other by squeezing a lemon over oysters.
Activities like these maintain a relatively lively atmosphere in the painting. As
for the man seated in the left-hand corner, who holds out his left hand toward
the viewer, it is impossible to tell whether he is talking to his neighbor or
addressing an unseen newcomer.

What is noteworthy about the composition, in comparison to the paint-
ing of 1616 in particular and to all earlier painting in general, is its marked
emphasis on divisions into groups, in keeping with Italian and Flemish mod-
els (Carracci, Rubens). Whereas the figures in the earlier work are arranged

completely symmetrically, here only three figures create the shorter, left side of the collapsed triangle, while a larger number of heads and torsos are nestled beneath the flagstaff on the right-hand side and combine to form the diagonals that support the compositional structure. The two groups of figures are also distinguished by the treatment of space. Only the men on the right are grouped around the spatial center created by the table; those on the left are kept within a plane by means of contrapposto arrangement. There is only the bare suggestion of an interior — a door in the right-hand corner, a sweep of drapery in the background — just enough to anchor the figures in the surrounding free space but without granting it any autonomy of its own.

The Group Portrait of the Civic Guard of Saint Hadrian in Haarlem of 1633

The civic guard group portrait of the Saint Hadrian's guard from 1633 (fig. 71) is often considered the high point of Hals's artistic career. It is the first of a series of group portraits in which the artist made a conscious attempt to get away from his usual practice of dividing the group into units and instead to integrate internal and external coherence more fully. Naturally, this meant less reliance on subordination. In the interim, this characteristic had become common in painting throughout Holland, as represented by the Amsterdam artists who reigned supreme over all other schools in the country because they first dared to establish these practices. Now it was time for Haarlem artists to follow.

Hals's choice of theme for the painting of 1633 is already a good indication of his new concerns: for the first time, he abandoned the idea of the banquet, the theme that lends itself so well to coordinated arrangements. Naturally, any Haarlem artist would still have deemed an activity that involved everyone — like de Keyser's parade review, for example — altogether too tedious. Accordingly, Hals, in keeping with the need for two relationships — the one among the figures and the one with the viewer — used two separate activities to establish coherence. On the left, six men stand around the seated captain, most of whom have direct eye contact with the viewer, while the figures on the right are gathered around a table in self-contained conversation (internal coherence).

As always, Hals unified his separate groups, in this case by showing one of the conversants in the right-hand group, whose neighbor has just turned to speak to him, acknowledging the unseen parties, and by having two other participants in the conversation look eagerly across at their colleagues in the left-hand group, where one of the standing guardsmen is looking down in an almost roguish way at the captain instead of out at the viewer. Even that was not enough for Hals: he also made each of the groups more unified within itself, avoiding the fragmentation he had used previously. The right-hand group, for example, consists not of a number of discrete subgroups (genre groups) but of a single unit in which all the figures involved are obviously participating in one and the same discussion. On the other hand, the figures

Fig. 70. Frans Hals
The Officers of the Civic Guard of Saint George, Haarlem, 1627
Haarlem, City Museum

Fig. 71. Frans Hals
The Officers of the Civic Guard of Saint Hadrian, Haarlem, 1633
Haarlem, City Museum

charged with external coherence are all passively subordinated to the viewer:
they acknowledge the viewer's presence without attempting to address the
viewer actively. To judge from the diversity of directions in which the men are
gazing, the number of unseen parties (viewers), in comparison to the situation
in earlier works, has become larger rather than smaller. It looks almost as
though Hals were explicitly objecting to the idea of a single viewing subject to
which all the other figures in the painting are subordinated.

Hals's treatment of Captain van Loo is also exceedingly noteworthy. This
is the first of his civic guard group portraits in which the dominant figure is
instantly recognizable. We know this because of the pains Hals has taken to
endow the head with a quality approaching grandeur (once again reminiscent
of Rubens) and, generally speaking, because of the figure's bearing; it is also
easy to recognize the captain because he is the only one in his immediate
group who is seated, while those around him remain standing. The subordi-
nation within the group is obviously superficial, however, because it actually
revolves around the viewer and not around the captain—whom Hals wisely
excluded from the self-contained group, where he might have dominated the
others. Consequently, the figure of the captain gives us enormous insight into
how, while making an ever-greater effort to achieve coherence, both internal
and external, that was as unfragmented as possible, Hals nevertheless contin-
ued to avoid a pure form of subordination as a matter of principle.

The triangle, the shape that organizes and integrates figures along a plane,
which appears in complete form in 1616 and in a fragmented form in 1627,
has disappeared completely from the composition here. Nevertheless, the
viewer notices immediately that the figures are not simply lined up as a row of
separate, upright axes in a plane, as formerly in the Symbolic period, but seem
fluidly linked together. What integrates them is a coherent system of continu-
ously intersecting diagonals that resembles the classical composition of the
Greeks. The figures who are interacting (on the right) are brought into con-
trapposto relationships with their very bodies. The contrapposto is, however,
much less drastic on the left where their job is simply to look straight out at
the viewer (though it is still apparent in the second and third figures, espe-
cially in the one farthest right with the zigzag outline). Furthermore, the
lances and swords, the command and flagstaffs, appear to supplement the lin-
ear elements in the left-hand group, as well as in the right-hand group, albeit
in a secondary way.

Even the treatment of the background setting—for the first time the scene
takes place out-of-doors—is adjusted to the figures in front of it. On the left,
behind the more serene, taller figures whose pure attentiveness bonds them
with the viewer in external coherence, Hals included a compact, planelike
wall of trees that establishes an appropriate optical, subjective plane, albeit by
haptic, objective means. On the other hand, behind the more animated, right-
hand group, where the figures are leaning in various directions, we find a
village square bordered by buildings, trees, and wooden walls. The openness
of the space is demonstrated by two guardsmen who are walking off into the

distance: Hals apparently felt he needed this openness to stress the spatial mobility of his more animated figures.

"The Meager Company"

Hals's desire for unified arrangements that rely only minimally on subordination brought him closer to Amsterdam's tradition of group portraiture; on the other hand, the desire of artists in Amsterdam for a greater degree of internal coherence, which had been evolving since approximately 1630, brought them closer to the Haarlem manner. This explains, therefore, how it came about that in 1637 the members of an Amsterdam civic guard made the bold decision to have themselves portrayed by the famous civic guard portrait painter from Haarlem. Despite the fact that the two viewpoints had converged somewhat, one could probably have predicted that a commission like this could never come to fruition without compromises on both sides. The danger loomed large, of course, either that the artist would become impatient with what he perceived as inappropriate demands or that the men issuing the commission would not be satisfied with the results. The former danger evidently did come to pass, because Houbraken reports that Hals never finished the painting. Moreover, from the looks of the group portrait itself, we can probably assume the latter danger transpired as well, because all the exciting hallmarks of Hals's style are missing, particularly from the right-hand side of the painting, without any of the deep character interpretation associated with Amsterdam tradition to compensate for them. The work (fig. 72) is presently located in the Rijksmuseum, no. 444 [RM no. SK-C-374], and is known by the name *The Meager Company.*

At first glance, the painting bears a resemblance to the work from 1633 just discussed, because the entire assemblage of men is once again divided into two equal halves, albeit now with the heads aligned more uniformly along the upper horizontal line. The group on the left is again the tranquil side, and again includes the captain who, however, is now associated with a second seated figure. There are also two men who project into the foreground and function like corner pillars framing the group, definitely in contrapposto to one another. The one on the left is the standard-bearer, one of the most arresting and appealing figures that Hals ever created. The one on the right is the sorrowful knight who, since Bode, is generally considered the work of Pieter Codde as reported by Houbraken. Behind this group is a sturdy block of wall. The group on the right is more animated and stands before an open space framed by a pillar at right; Hals never missed an opportunity to supply sturdy framing devices like this in scenes taking place out-of-doors. In spite of these basic similarities, the vast differences between the two paintings are unmistakable.

Significantly, this is the only group portrait by Hals with full-length figures. Because his main artistic concern was to situate figures convincingly in space and not to depict the surrounding free space as such, he must have found it irksome to have to include the legs, because the spaces around these

Fig. 72. Frans Hals
Company of Captain Reynier Reael and Lieutenant
Cornelis Michielsz. Blau, 1637
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Fig. 73. Frans Hals
The Officers of the Civic Guard of Saint George,
Haarlem, 1639
Haarlem, City Museum

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only distracted from his main purpose and were no help to him at all. The members of the Amsterdam civic guard, however, who were already familiar with the work of Rembrandt and de Keyser, obviously demanded greater emphasis on free space. In response to this, he made the light fall harshly from the left so that the men's legs cast strong shadows; furthermore, he eliminated all objects in the background of the right-hand side of the painting to allow an unobstructed view of an open sky shot through by a slanting sunbeam.

The pictorial conception, to return to this aspect, also differs markedly from that of the painting of 1633. The left-hand group is more self-contained in every respect; it is not, however, as earlier, subordinated to the viewer, but includes the representatives of internal coherence within its ranks. The second seated man is speaking, though, characteristically, he is not the captain, whose appearance, like that of his counterpart van Loo, otherwise marks him as such at first glance. Rather, the captain is attentively listening, along with several of the others, while his remaining colleagues in the left-hand group look out in the direction of the viewer.

The left-hand half is decidedly the more satisfying of the two. The right-hand side, in contrast, leaves one totally indifferent. If we did not have confirmation of Hals's involvement in the work, we would probably hesitate to attribute this part to him. Its internal coherence is unresolved, and there is no convincing external coherence to take its place, because the men are gazing in too many directions at once (thus implying scattered viewers). One of them is actually gesturing toward the viewer, but in a very weak, tentative way; at the same time, the head and arm of the man next to him are frozen in awkward positions because he is trying to turn toward the left-hand group. The figures stride in all directions without any particular purpose, and since there is nothing motivating their actions, they are incapable of establishing either internal or external coherence. Hals had apparently decided to accommodate the wishes of the Amsterdam militia, but ended up sacrificing his own concerns without successfully meeting theirs.

In the composition, a reduction in the use of contrapposto is evident; the integrating effect of crisscrossing diagonals created by the various pikestaffs is adequate only on the left side. The main movement slants down from the upper right of the painting toward lower left. The figures in the left-hand group are pushed farther back in space; the men in the back rows are quite flat and small. On the other hand, those in the right-hand group are standing far apart, creating generous spaces between them in an arrangement that is highly unusual for Hals, with which he obviously did not feel at home. Once again, all of these departures from Hals's usual practices — inhibiting the integrating effects of diagonals, intensifying the effects of recessive space, and opening up the empty spaces between the figures — can surely be attributed to his attempt to accommodate the expectations of his Amsterdam patrons.

The Group Portrait of the Civic Guard of Saint George
in Haarlem of 1639

The last civic guard group portrait painted by Hals is of the civic guard of Saint George of 1639 (fig. 73). Now, anyone who thinks of Hals in this connection only as a painter of banquets will be very surprised at this painting because it looks at first like one of the group portraits produced in Amsterdam in the second period, in which the pictorial conception is based on a "presentation." Anyone who has taken a good look at the paintings of 1633 and 1637 will not find Hals's solution in 1639 to be totally unanticipated. The concern with the avoidance of fragmentation and with effective, overall external coherence — neither of which had been as important to artists in Haarlem as to their colleagues in Amsterdam — had now finally become of urgent interest in Hals's immediate milieu.

Of course, Hals had long abandoned the kind of pure banquet scenes where the figures break off and form tight, little, coordinated genre scenes. In the second painting from 1627, idle conversation has already been introduced, and after 1633 the banquet motif disappeared entirely to be replaced by an external presentation (a passive relationship with the viewer), which is also essentially what we find in 1637. In the painting of 1639, however, even conversation within groups has disappeared with the exception of a few superficial suggestions of it in the back row. All the figures are left to their own devices, as they line up for review in front of the viewer — who, as always with Hals, should be thought of in the plural, scattered over a large area (moreover, the later the work, the more extreme this tendency). The figures, therefore, exist essentially only for the sake of the viewer outside the painting. Nevertheless, because they must be aware of standing next to each other at that moment and of the purpose for which they have all come, they are unified by internal coherence, in spite of their lack of interaction. This sets Hals's arrangement apart from that of Aert Pietersz., whose works have no internal coherence at all. This the first painting produced in Haarlem with the kind of internal coherence that had already been part of the tradition of group portraiture in Amsterdam for a long time.

One rank of guardsmen has already lined up, while the rest of them are descending a flight of steps to do the same, under the command of two members — a lance-bearer and a standard-bearer — who are in charge of internal coherence. No two guardsmen are definitely interacting with each other. Each is completely engrossed in taking up his proper position on parade in front of the viewer — with whom, however, only a few bother to concern themselves directly in an active way. Now, Hals's strong suit in portraiture was his ability, on a psychological level, to add a dash of joviality to his figures' attentiveness and, on a physical level, to make them look as though they were capable of free, spontaneous movement. The pictorial conception here, because it is so different from that of his earlier works, did not allow him to exploit either forte. In fact, most of the guardsmen of 1639 lack the engaging qualities of their earlier comrades. Seen from this point of view, the

impression of a decline in Hals's art is understandable, as is the loss of respect he suffered in the eyes of his contemporaries and clients; this also explains the striking lack of paintings dating from his last twenty-five years. The changing times brought new challenges that Hals's old formulas could no longer meet. After 1650 even famous artists in Amsterdam were having a hard time maintaining reputations up to their former level. How much more difficult it must have been for an artist from Haarlem to keep pace with the taste of the times, especially one whose career extended all the way back to the Truce of Antwerp.

What remains characteristic of Hals is that, even in a painting in which he conscientiously avoided fragmenting the group into little genre episodes, he established a relatively uncompromising external (and simultaneously internal) coherence; he still managed to circumvent subordination, if anything, to a greater degree than earlier. The captain is in the lower row, third from left, identified by his baton as well as by his martial stature and physiognomy — without, however, making the slightest domineering gesture. If there are any such gestures at all in the painting, then they are the ones performed by the two giving orders in the second row. As far as external coherence is concerned, the portrait figures no longer look as though they have been forced into a passive, subordinated relationship with the viewer, and that is because, as mentioned before, they are looking in too many different directions, implying a large number of viewers distributed over a large area.

The composition is most closely related to the one used for the left-hand half of the painting of 1633. The contrapposto, however, is much less pronounced, and the task of relating things within a plane is left primarily to the shafts of the lances which, beginning on the right-hand side, slant first from upper right to lower left, then gradually intersect the vertical and finally, on the left-hand side, lean from upper left to lower right. Furthermore, Hals treated the background in the way familiar to us from 1633 and 1637: to the left is a compact wall of trees, to the right a receding space enclosed this time by a broad palace between rounded treetops. The right-hand framing pillar is formed by a succession of foreshortened lengths of masonry. Whereas the well-defined and perspectively lengthened open space in the background in 1633 still reminds us of three-dimensional spatial centers like the tables in banquet scenes (with their inevitable flavor of the haptic and concrete), the one in 1639 is suggested rather than spelled out, creating more of an optical space, an impression enhanced by a touch of chiaroscuro.

And so it was that Hals, three years before Rembrandt, solved the artistic problem of establishing both internal and external coherence in a group portrait of parading guardsmen who, moreover, are arranged in free space so that both the planar and the spatial compositions of the painting are resolved.

The Beginnings of Regent Portraiture in Haarlem:
The Regents of Saint Elizabeth's Hospital

Once group portraiture in Haarlem had reached this stage of evolution, it was ready to take on the challenge of the type of commission that it had obstinately shunned up to this point: the regent group portrait. As explained earlier (p. 211), this was not a category of painting that lent itself particularly well to the specific artistic interests and assets of Haarlem artists so that, consequently, they were automatically more dependent on their colleagues in Amsterdam. However, since, as far as we know, it was Hals who laid the foundations of regent portraiture in Haarlem, we can still expect a certain amount of originality, at least within modest limits.

There is a group portrait dating from 1641 of the regents of Saint Elizabeth's Hospital (fig. 74), presently on permanent loan to the Haarlem City Museum. The five hospital administrators, depicted as half-length figures, are deliberating around a table in an interior. What makes the pictorial conception here fundamentally different from those of all the regent portraits produced in Amsterdam that we have encountered before now is the fact that none of the five men is turned directly toward the viewer. Hals blithely dispensed with a convention that Rembrandt still felt compelled to use for at least one figure in his anatomy lesson of 1632 (in spite of having established internal coherence between the audience of surgeons and the lecturing professor): this was the Hollandish insistence on the need for a group portrait to have external coherence that is clear at a glance. Hals's refusal to allow a strikingly evident representation of external coherence gets at the heart of what distinguishes this regent portrait from those produced in Amsterdam.

On the other hand, neither is there the fragmentation into little genre episodes, or self-contained units, that had been characteristic of Haarlem group portraiture since Cornelisz.'s earliest example of this type. Rather, the interrelationships among the five figures join them together into a single, unified group. That touches upon the feature of this Halsian painting that is not typical of the Haarlem tradition—although, as we have been observing, Hals's last civic guard group portraits indicate that he was beginning systematically to exploit this kind of arrangement. To establish perfect internal coherence involving *all* of the figures in a painting without relying on subordination sounds like an impossibility. How did Hals, with his strong aversion to all forms of subordination, come to terms with this problem? To find out, we must first look more closely at the pictorial conception of the present painting.

The three regents on the left-hand side are all looking over at a fourth man who, with his back half-turned to the viewer and his face in profile, is looking left with a thoughtful expression. The fifth man at the right end of the table, obviously the treasurer, is calmly awaiting the results of the others' deliberations. The first three are gesticulating in a relatively lively way that is clearly supposed to suggest their state of excitement. The one in the middle has actually leaped up and, speaking to the fourth man, thrust out his hand with his

Fig. 74. Frans Hals
The Regents of Saint Elizabeth's Hospital, 1641
Haarlem, City Museum

fingers outstretched. Meanwhile, his two neighbors are eagerly listening and are waiting expectantly to see what effect his words will have on the fourth man; this animates them to such a degree that the distinction between them as passive listeners and him as speaker is blurred. As a result, all three join forces in a coordinated relationship with each other, directed toward the fourth man. The cause of their shared excitement is obviously the anticipated reaction of this silent fourth person to whom they seem to be presenting an argument, which he is passively resisting. The fact that Hals positioned this man (the second from right) in a view that is inappropriate for a portrait, namely, in profile, shows how important Hals felt it was for the figure, looking to the side with an expression of peaceful contemplation, to provide a strong contrast to the three other men who are pressing him for a reply.

Now, the question is, who is dominant and who is subordinate in this self-contained unit? As a rule, the dominant character (artistically speaking) is the one involved in an action of some sort. In this case, however, there is not one figure (the speaker) but three figures (the speaker plus his coordinated neighbors) who are animated and therefore in contrast to the single passive figure, while a fifth, neutral figure looks on (representing pure attentiveness devoid of will and emotion). Hals's solution for avoiding the trap of subordination, therefore, was to assign dominance to a majority of the figures, not just to one. This, in turn, enables the single subordinated fellow to maintain a certain degree of dominance, so that, ultimately, the relationships among all the figures are roughly coordinated.

The best way to gain a deeper understanding of this pictorial conception, and of the artist's unique qualities that led to it, is to compare it with those of two paintings produced in Amsterdam that, on the surface, are closely related. The first one was painted three years before this one, so that Hals probably knew it: Thomas de Keyser's four burgomasters of Amsterdam (fig. 47). The position of the head of the second person from left in de Keyser's work strongly resembles that of the passive figure (the second from right) in Hals's regent portrait. The differences in the details of the heads are therefore all the more remarkable. De Keyser's burgomaster is focusing his attention on a fixed point (the officer announcing the arrival of Marie de Médicis); the artist has painted his features with a completely imperturbable, neutral expression. On the other hand, Hals's regent, though he is looking slightly upward and off into space, in a direction where there cannot be much to see, looks alert, with a will to act characteristically expressed by a physical detail, namely, the shadow created by the furrow in his left temple.

Perhaps even more striking is the way the remaining figures differ from each other. We have already discovered (see pp. 251 ff.) how de Keyser turned a historical event, which should have given the participants cause for excitement, into an intimate conversation piece that is true to the style of Holland. Hals was following, as usual, his penchant for dynamic, physical activity,[62] which was, however, no longer the good-humored, pleasure-seeking kind that he preferred earlier. On the contrary, he now wanted his figures' movements

to be informed by a sense of dramatic conflict. In other words, his thinking was evolving toward Rembrandt's pictorial conception, in fact, if you will, in the direction of Italian Baroque art. The attentiveness of de Keyser's burgo-masters escalates in Hals's figures into an earnest, tense state of anticipation — with the exception of a single figure who, for that reason, strikes us as the most typical Hollander of all the men in the painting. This is the treasurer on the right side of the table, whom only a painter of seventeenth-century Holland could have painted.

The second painting, whose relationship with Hals's regent portrait of 1641 has long been acknowledged, is Rembrandt's *Staalmeesters* of 1661–1662. The greatest points of resemblance are, of course, particularly between the arrangements of the figures and the self-contained areas of chiaroscuro, that is to say, in the outward, physical aspects of the composition. The fundamental difference between the two pictorial conceptions was emphasized earlier: the work by Hals lacks the unseen applicant who plays such a crucial role in the work by Rembrandt.

Hals's and Rembrandt's solutions are very different from each other, but, because these artists happen to be Holland's two most important painters, it is essential for us to investigate the various aspects of the device they share as fellow artists from Holland, namely, two-level attentiveness. This was Rembrandt's solution in *The Staalmeesters* to the problem of integrating internal and external coherence, which had been central to the third period of group portrait painting in Holland; it was also the means that Hals had already exploited in his regent portrait of 1641. First of all, Hals had not yet decided, as Rembrandt would shortly, to endow all the participants (except-ing, of course, the speaker himself) with two-level attentiveness, but only half of them (two out of four). Secondly, the attentiveness of Hals's figures (again not counting the speaker) is not oriented toward the unseen applicant (the viewer), as it is with Rembrandt's figures but toward an individual who is visible within the painting (the passive fourth person, discussed above). This brings us back to the point where the pictorial conceptions of these otherwise closely related paintings fundamentally diverge: whereas Rembrandt still felt compelled in *The Staalmeesters* to use the most obvious and eye-catching means of solidly establishing external coherence by adhering to the traditional Amsterdam practice of turning figures directly toward the viewer, Hals had already decided to dispense with it. His five figures are fused in internal coher-ence without any regard for the viewer. In other words, Hals thought that he, quite in contrast to his colleagues in Amsterdam, could get along without including an unseen applicant in his first regent portrait.

This decision suggests that Hals was perfectly content simply to establish internal coherence in his paintings and abandon external coherence alto-gether. After all, that seems to have been the intention of the founder of group portraiture in Haarlem, as evident in his earliest painting from 1583. Never-theless, Hals would not have been the Hollander he was if external coherence were not at least as important to him as internal coherence — and, indeed, for

him as well as for his Amsterdam colleagues, internal coherence was no more than the most convenient means of attaining the overarching goal of external coherence. The only thing that sets Hals apart in this respect is his belief that it was not essential to include the viewer in the pictorial conception by casting him or her in the role of unseen applicant. He thought he could solve the problem using more subtle, less conspicuous means.

The means he chose become obvious when the present painting is compared with an Italian or Flemish example. To gain real insight into one of Hals's works, one has to analyze each individual figure formally on a psychological level. This is almost never necessary for the figures in works by Italians or Italian-influenced artists, because their inner states of will and emotion are always clearly stated in their facial features. In the art of Holland, however, these inner states are so hidden beneath a neutralizing attentiveness that it takes careful, painstaking observation and deep reflection for the viewer to peel back the surface and reveal them. As a result of this intense process that viewing subjects are expected to undergo and that makes demands on their whole conscious experience, they become so intimately implicated in the inner workings of the scene, so deeply invested, so to speak, in the reality of what is happening there, that what began as an external incident becomes an inner experience. In short, this is the pictorial conception of the genre painting of seventeenth-century Holland, as practiced for instance by Adriaen van Ostade, Hals's pupil. It is the kind that had developed beyond the previous stage of Holland's genre painting as seen in Pieter Aertsen (figs. 25, 26), which was totally lacking in internal coherence. It had outgrown the device of having figures directly address the viewer. The artists espousing this brand of pictorial conception no longer thought it necessary to make a special effort to draw the viewer's attention to the existence of the viewing subject outside the objective world of the painting. As such, it represents a step in the direction of modern thinking—though not the modern pictorial conception as such, for which the objects in a painting are exclusively sensations of the viewing subject. Nevertheless, because the psychological process just described involved interweaving the objective more intimately into the subjective realm, it did serve to mitigate the Baroque dualism that had kept object and subject at opposite poles. Here is a good place to recall the fact that Rembrandt, at approximately the same time, was painting a group portrait (*The Night Watch*) that also came close to rejecting the idea that figures necessarily had to have an obvious, direct relationship with the viewer. And yet Rembrandt apparently did not think that this solution represented any advance for group portrait painting, because twenty years later he returned to the convention of a direct relationship between the figures in the portrait and an unseen applicant. Furthermore, Hals did the same thing: his last group portraits of 1644 show him again turning figures to confront the viewer. As a result, the urgent question arises as to why the solution that lends itself so well to genre painting does not seem to be possible in group portraiture.

The first thing that needs to be made clear is that, contrary to initial

appearances, the pictorial conception of the genre painting of seventeenth-century Holland had not moved as far in the modern direction as had contemporary portrait painting. After Pieter Aertsen, genre painters generally abandoned the idea of including the viewing subject as an integral part of the painting, even though it still survived in works by the society painters who followed Hals (Pieter Codde and others). Nevertheless, the attentive observer will easily discover details in these genre works that clash with our modern, subjective pictorial conception and reveal them as a product of the Baroque era, that is, they always make a more or less strict distinction between subject and object. Nevertheless, there is absolutely no denying that portrait painting in the 1640s through the 1660s was behind the times, because it still exploited the device of turning portrait figures toward the viewer, which was the strongest and most obvious confirmation of Baroque dualism. Why did portrait painting of the time cling to a device almost entirely abandoned by genre painting?

The answer naturally lies in the peculiar nature of this category of painting and in the limitations it imposes on expressive possibilities. One should not forget that it is the overarching influence of artistic volition, and not the artistic genres per se, that ultimately determines how things will be rendered in a work of art: whether psychologically or physically isolated or connected. This artistic volition freely picks and chooses the appropriate artistic genres according to its needs. That might lead one to assume that art in Holland would abandon its superseded forms of portraiture as soon as the genre painting of Ostade and Steen, Terborch and Vermeer presented it with the perfect opportunity to fulfill all its artistic intentions. And this assumption would be perfectly logical, if individual evolutionary stages succeeded each other like discrete, stratified layers. We know, however, that history always progresses in barely perceptible transitions. A work of art can, for example, have one aspect that is advanced because the artist happened to be concentrating on the solution to that particular problem at that particular time. This can make another aspect seem that much more outdated, and yet each compensates for the other so that, on balance, the work retains its appropriate stratum in the evolution. Rembrandt's placement of his syndics in direct contact with the viewer may seem Baroque and thus antiquated in comparison to the behavior of the clientele in one of Adriaen van Ostade's taverns, but no one would ever question the fact that, overall, Rembrandt's last regent portrait more nearly approximates the modern artistic volition than almost any other painting of its time.

All portrait painting presupposes an objective individual whose physical and psychological nature is completely independent from the subjective perceptions of any given viewer. In other words, a portrait should above all resemble the person being portrayed. Portraiture is fundamentally incompatible with a subjective pictorial conception like the one practiced in recent art, where everything objective vaporizes into subjective sensations. The modern artist finds it necessary to suppress the objective qualities of things that everyone

can see and to replace them with other aspects that only the artist can see. One champion of the most modern trend in art (Schultze-Naumburg) has even come right out and said that a portrait need not resemble its sitter at all, which, of course, more or less dispenses with portraiture as it has been practiced for thousands of years.

Now, the art of seventeenth-century Holland, as emphasized repeatedly, was still far away from modern subjectivism. The ultimate goal of Holland's pictorial conception was to perfect a way of depicting figures in a state of selfless attentiveness, and so, for this purpose, the art of Holland still needed portraiture as much as ever. Artists had begun, however, to fix their figures' attentiveness in a particular space and time, which necessarily involved introducing the nuances of will and feeling associated with genre painting. This led them, to an ever increasing degree, to delve into the psychological aspects of their figures, a process that could only be detrimental to preserving the pure, objective nature of the portrait. Treating group portraits like genre scenes was bound to reach its limits quickly, beyond which portrait quality would visibly begin to suffer, if not disappear altogether.

This is already true of some of the physical aspects of our two examples: both de Keyser (fig. 47) and Hals (fig. 74) have heads in pure profile that — as even the most casual observer could not help but notice — are not satisfactory portraits. The effects are far more devastating on a psychological level: the inner coherence required by genre painting (of the psychological sort, not involving physical activity) in turn requires that the figures' facial features register how their attentiveness is responding to will or emotion at a given moment. In the early 1640s, the art of Holland seemed on the brink of abandoning a pure form of portraiture in favor of genre painting's practice of positioning figures in a specific place and time, as evidenced by Hals's *Regents of Saint Elizabeth's Hospital* and Rembrandt's *Night Watch* (as well as by the great upswing in intimate genre scenes and landscape painting, the latter of which seemed to present difficulties at the time even to someone like Rembrandt). In each of these works, the artist had obviously overstepped the boundaries of portrait painting: Hals, because he made absolutely no effort to take the viewing subject into account, and Rembrandt, because of his formidable application of subordination. We heard earlier how Rembrandt's contemporaries requited him for this, and the same applies to Hals. Although there is no direct evidence, we can infer this from the fact that the man who was the founder of the Haarlem regent portrait and had been the most celebrated and most prominent artist of his city for a quarter of a century, was not offered a single commission from any of his countrymen for nearly a quarter of a century before he was finally entrusted with one again. Before we go on to this work of Hals's old age, however, we still need to look at the composition of the painting of 1641, which, like its pictorial conception, has some special features and, compared to other painting in Haarlem, some innovative ones as well.

A characteristic of Haarlem group portraiture of the third period was that

it increasingly came to resemble painting in Amsterdam. In the pictorial conception of the painting of 1641, this resemblance took the form of figures that were more closely integrated in internal coherence rather than broken up into smaller units as previously. Its composition is even closer to Amsterdam tradition, as has long been noted, though mostly in terms of Hals's adoption of Rembrandt's chiaroscuro in this work from 1641. And, in fact, even though the five regents here, by comparison with the figures in *The Night Watch* and other contemporary works of Rembrandt, maintain a higher degree of autonomy with respect to the interior in which they are placed, the free space surrounding them nevertheless has more significant presence here than in Hals's earlier civic guard group portraits.

The figures' heightened interaction with their surrounding space is accompanied by an increased integration within a plane. Hals again composed the men within a rigid triangle instead of lining them up in continuous contrapposto arrangements to keep them connected. The triangle not only compresses the whole group of figures purely physically within its shape, as in the painting of 1616, but repeats itself in the individual figures: for example, the line ascending from bottom left to upper right along the axes of both figures on the left side is matched symmetrically on the right-hand side by that of the upturned and (not coincidentally) wide brims of the hats, while the figure in the middle represents a firm, immobile vertical axis without actually forming a dominating apex. The surface of the table is still visible, providing a palpable spatial center for the five figures, whereas it had already disappeared from view in *The Staalmeesters*. In comparison to Rembrandt, Hals held to a more haptic approach to giving his figures a sense of solidity, of well-defined contours. As a result, he had no need to equalize them within the kind of optical plane that Rembrandt was compelled to use to contain the unruly, atomizing relief of *The Staalmeesters*.

The Regents and Regentesses of the Oudenmannenhuis in Haarlem of 1664

Hals's last two regent portraits of 1664 are usually dismissed as less than worthy representatives of his art because they allegedly show signs of the feebleness of old age. As far as his age is concerned, evidence for the year of his birth is as unreliable as the information regarding his artistic training; however, considering that his first dated civic guard group portrait is from a half-century earlier (1616) and that, according to his biographers, he was living in a home for the aged by 1664, because he could no longer earn a living, we can assume he was an old man by that time.

Now, there is no lack of examples of individual artists who continued to produce completely competent and significant work into a ripe, old age. Moreover, in finding himself obliged to rely on the generosity of his fellow citizens in later years, Hals shared the fate of many colleagues, sometimes even younger ones, who had found, like him, that they could not keep up with the rapidly evolving progress in the fashions of the period and thus lost touch

with a public whose demands seemed to change day by day. They were artists who thought too independently to try and accept new devices that were incompatible with their own sensibilities. Therefore, we have every reason to approach the works of Hals's old age (figs. 75, 76) with an unprejudiced eye, so that we can begin to appreciate how the intervening twenty-three years since his last known group portrait left their distinct traces in his last works.

It is clear at a glance that Hals had finally accepted the idea of establishing external coherence by drawing an unseen party into the content of the painting in a way that is direct and therefore immediately arresting. The regents and regentesses are deliberating with an applicant who is assumed to be standing in the position of the viewing subject. One person is speaking, and therefore subordinating the other figures in the painting, as well as the applicant who is being addressed. Thus far, Hals seems to have taken over the pictorial conception of *The Staalmeesters,* dating from three years earlier.

Despite this shared basic pictorial conception, there are two differences that are typical of the Haarlem artist. First of all, whereas Rembrandt did not allow the single speaker to have eye contact either with his colleagues or the applicant, but had all the other syndics plus the servant looking out at the applicant, Hals placed the speakers in both paintings, who are singled out by their hand gestures, in direct relationship to the viewer. Rembrandt obviously intended the subordination in *The Staalmeesters,* which he had so systematically constructed, to operate as much as possible on a purely psychological basis: the speaker, who holds mental sway over everyone within and without the painting, conscientiously avoids emphasizing his dominant role with physical gestures. This type of subtle characterization was antipathetic to the aged artist of Haarlem, even after he had labored since the 1630s to keep his temperament under control. To Hals's way of thinking, subordinating oneself to another person was only possible if done with pleasure, and therefore it was fundamental and essential that the subordinated party be depicted as open and cheerful toward the subordinator.

Secondly, whereas Rembrandt had all the figures in the painting, with the exception of the speaker, uniformly focusing on the applicant, Hals included two people in each painting who are not looking out at the viewer, but are passive listeners subordinate to the speaker. As we have seen, the irresistible fascination of *The Staalmeesters* is a direct result of this uniformity of attentiveness. However, it takes the strength of an artist like Rembrandt to endow portrait heads with enough psychological depth to make each of them speak to us of a fervent inner life. Far from being neutralized or numbed by this repetition of an identical, immobile pose, each portrait head actually intensifies the effect of its neighbor. Hals, however, was even less likely to attempt this second great feat of subtle interpretation than he was the first, and so he opted to include two figures in each painting to break the uniformity of turning all the figures toward the viewer.

In the portrait of the male regents, the two are grouped together on the left-hand side. One looks in the approximate direction of the speaker, while
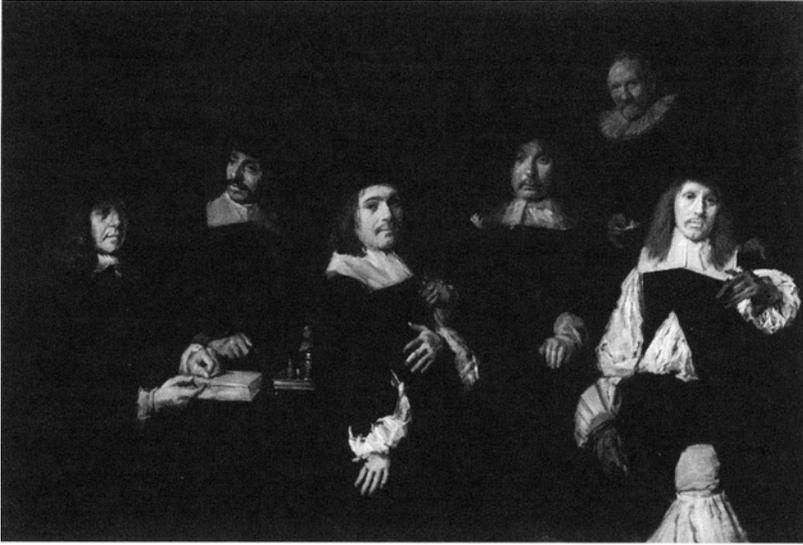
Fig. 75. Frans Hals
The Regents of the Oudemannenhuis, 1664
Haarlem, City Museum

Fig. 76. Frans Hals
The Regentesses of the Oudemannenhuis, 1664
Haarlem, City Museum

not looking directly at him. A corresponding movement of his right index fin-
ger supports this interpretation of his orientation. His neighbor, meanwhile,
has averted his head from the speaker. Both of the figures therefore demon-
strate psychological, though not physical, dependence on the speaker. As for
the regentesses, the woman seated next to the speaker is behaving in an alto-
gether similar fashion, although the torso of the servant standing on the right
is turned to the speaker as a more direct sign of her subordination.

As a result of both of these departures from the pictorial conception of
The Staalmeesters, Hals never developed a solution for expressing internal
and external coherence that was as perfect as Rembrandt's. The impression of
internal coherence is immediately compromised by the fact that the figures
who are not in contact with the viewer have a different orientation from those
who are. This, in turn, indirectly impairs the impression of external coher-
ence. The cause here, however, is not so much that some of the figures have
turned away from the viewer but that their physical movements are unre-
strained. This has an objective effect that jarringly disturbs the tranquil optical
impression and interrupts the psychological interaction that should emerge
between subject (viewer) and object (the figures in the painting).

Though Hals's pictorial conception in his final regent portraits, as outlined
here, did depart from Rembrandt's, it had nevertheless moved closer to the
Amsterdam manner. Proof of this is furnished by Rembrandt's pupil Ferdinand
Bol, whose group portrait of three regentesses of the leper hospital (fig. 65)
has exactly the same pictorial conception as Hals's work. Because Bol reduced
the number of figures to three, his solution serves as an especially clear and
almost paradigmatic example.

The pictorial conception of the individual figures, like that of each paint-
ing considered as a whole, shows how, on the one hand, Hals was gravitating
toward the painting tradition that Rembrandt had brought to its high point
in Amsterdam, and, on the other, still stubbornly refused to give up out-of-
date Haarlem practices. In both works, the results are, of necessity, not wholly
satisfactory: the figures are no longer Hals but not yet Rembrandt. The pro-
vocative, boisterous spirits and exuberant joie de vivre of the earlier works
have disappeared; on the other hand, the figures do not seem to be ascetics
exactly, so that one is tempted to suspect them of being aging bon vivants.
The dissipated expression of the unkempt speaker in the portrait of the male
regents, with his crooked hat and disheveled hair, is typical. The most conge-
nial of them all is the old manservant, whose friendly and guileless expression
still has a touch of the naive joyousness that characterized the figures of
Hals's youthful production. It is also interesting to observe how the artist
reconciled himself to the uniformity of the showy costumes of this late period.
Although he was forced to give in to the homogeneous fashion of the day,
this inveterate enemy of subordination compensated by simply leaving a vest
unbuttoned here, crumpling a lacy sleeve there, or, as pointed out before,
setting a hat on crooked, et cetera, all of which serves, of course, to break up
the uniformity.

In composition, too, Hals succeeded in progressing beyond the stage of his earlier achievements in a manner in keeping with the evolution in Holland as a whole. Originally, whenever he depicted figures in space, he was interested only in the figures and not in free space as such. Artists in Holland, however, began more and more to see self-contained solid objects in a continuum with their surrounding space. This inspired Hals to turn his attention to space, as evidenced by his adoption of the Amsterdam device of chiaroscuro in 1641. The two works of his old age, however, show that he went even further than this, moving in the direction of the Delft painters, who were reverting to the use of local color in the form of black-white-red painting.[63] Their figures' shapes, when arranged in interior spaces, are like colored clouds, with a solid core but fluid contours. The artists of Delft, however, painted their interiors with the same care, using light reflections and tonal values to give their figures clear demarcations while simultaneously integrating them. Hals's interior, on the other hand, remained a mere suggestion of a distant view, and this compelled him to adopt a broad way of applying paint. Seen close up, it looks unfinished and sketchy: this is the aspect that captious and materialistic critics have always pointed to as evidence of the shaky hands of an aged artist.

The overall composition shows the least progress in comparison to the regent portrait of 1641. While Hals was obviously making more of an attempt to replicate Rembrandt's optical plane, he still reverted to the table as spatial center, particularly for the painting of the regentesses. Perhaps he felt he had to include a haptic counterbalance, especially in the case of the regentesses, for the impressionistically painted landscape on the rear wall that has something of the character of Wijnants or of some other Italianate artist of the period.

The Group Portrait of the Civic Guard of Saint Hadrian in Haarlem by Hendrik Pot

As long as the characteristics of group portraiture in Haarlem were synonymous with Hals's personal tendencies, as they were throughout the 1620s and 1630s, other artists hardly had a chance of obtaining commissions. As a result, the City Museum in Haarlem has only one civic guard group portrait of this period by an artist other than Hals. It depicts the officers of the civic guard of Saint Hadrian in Haarlem (fig. 77) and is attributed in the catalog to Hendrik Pot, whose best accomplishments lay in an entirely different direction, and who represents in certain respects the transition from Hals to Terborch. The date of 1630 in the catalog accords fairly well with the clothing and technique.

Our first glance tells us that the individual figures have inherited the spirit of Hals's art, though Pot seems to have taken this to extremes never seen in his more eminent colleague's own civic guard group portraits. This painting shows that there were people in Haarlem who found Hals too low-key and reserved an artist. Pot was attempting to outdo Hals, and his desire to create an even livelier sense of excitement naturally led him to concentrate primarily

on the external appearance of his figures, particularly on their physical movements. As a result, the composition is the first thing one notices in the painting, and, against our custom, it will therefore be the first aspect we examine.

The unusual feature of the composition of this painting is that not only are both the figures and the background arranged along diagonals that slant from the foreground on the left toward the background on the right, but the two diagonals created by the figures and the background constantly change course: they alternately project and recede, varying in depth and direction. The officers enter above from left to right through a door; then, they pivot at a right angle to the right, crowd down a steep and narrow flight of steps, and finally veer off to their right. The five figures still on the steps recede one behind the other, while the four figures who have already descended are grouped around a wedge of empty space. Finally, the right-hand member of the foreground pair looms assertively forward.

The background effectively accentuates the idea of a milling crowd of figures. It consists of a row of buildings slanting back into space that do not establish a uniform front; instead, like the figures, the surfaces project and recede erratically to create nooks and crannies as well as deep spaces. What is more, these architectural fragments are cut off at the top by the frame, thus heightening the tight, claustrophobic impression even further. Pot's original intention in planning this composition was to avoid the impression of a plane and instead do everything in his power to show that the figures and the background were projecting and receding in space. His means of integrating them into a haptic plane are exactly the same as Hals's, namely, repeated contrapposto arrangements, produced by the turning of heads, gesticulating of arms, and particularly the whole assortment of lances, flagstaffs, command staffs, and handrails. These dampening effects prove to be not nearly enough to balance out the artist's extremes in depicting space. As a result, in spite of the high quality of the details, the painting as a whole makes a disconcerting, almost awkward impression on the viewer.

The fact that the pictorial conception is based on the idea of men setting out on a march already makes it of interest to us, for this is the same means of establishing internal coherence that de Keyser was exploiting at almost the same time and that Rembrandt took up twelve years later. Hals in Haarlem, however, did not attempt it until 1639. As might have been expected, Pot, true to his Haarlem origins, situated a subgroup of four men, bonded in internal coherence, squarely in the middle of the painting.

Within this subgroup, the man closest to the head of the line is subordinating the others, although what he means by the gesture of his left hand is impossible to say with certainty. Perhaps it is an invitation for the others to take up their places behind the pair leading the group, and to line up likewise in twos now that they have descended the stairs. Then we would be dealing with the idea of a transfer of orders through the ranks of men, as in *The Night Watch*. Should this be the case, then the contrast between a Haarlem artist's idea of internal coherence and that of his colleague in Amsterdam would

Fig. 77. Hendrik Gerritsz. Pot
The Officers of the Civic Guard of Saint Hadrian, Haarlem, 1630
Haarlem, City Museum

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appear still more marked. Perhaps, however, the gesture is only meant to indicate that a conversation is going on among the men.

Whatever the import of this group of four, it does not seem to concern the five men on the stairs, who are engrossed exclusively in their own act of descending. Finally, the man whom we have already declared the captain, one of the pair leading the group, gazes out, haughtily studying the viewer. His imperious stance, the staff he holds in his left hand, and the way he is striding out in front of the others mark him as the commanding officer. But there is no indication whatever that the others are subordinated to him, that is, that their marching is a consequence of his command. The officers seem to be on the march simply because they share a desire to do so.

Nevertheless, there is an internal coherence resulting from the men's shared activity of marching. Moreover, it is far stronger here than in Teunissen's banquet of 1533 or in Jacobsz.'s march of 1563, for in these two works of the Symbolic period some of the figures actually do the opposite of what their circumstances would seem to dictate. In Pot's group portrait of 1630, no figure is behaving in a way inappropriate to the idea of a march; on the other hand, Pot has not interpreted the men's shared will to march so narrowly and so unequivocally as to exhaust the meaning of the painting. How much more striking is the march theme in de Keyser's painting of 1632, where all the guardsmen have formed up in response to the command, and how perfect in *The Night Watch,* where Rembrandt made the command itself the main subject of his portrayal.

Another feature of Pot's painting typical of Haarlem is the limitation, in this case to one, of the number of figures who have direct contact with the viewer and are in charge of external coherence. Here, this function is in the hands of the captain, who is in a position to mediate between the viewer's space and the whole corps.

The End of Civic Guard Group Portraiture in Haarlem: Pieter Soutman

It is a pity, as mentioned earlier, that we have no documentation of what the people of Haarlem thought when Hals produced his regent group portrait for Saint Elizabeth's Hospital in 1641. The genre itself was new in the city, and for that reason must have looked revolutionary at the time, with its self-contained internal coherence and chiaroscuro. We can only infer the answer from the fact that it took no less than twenty-three years for the artist to receive another group portrait commission, even though he had previously had no rivals in group portraiture in Haarlem. The suspicion that the people of Haarlem were not pleased by the changes in his painting becomes all but certain the moment one considers the group portraits produced in Haarlem shortly thereafter.

Jan Verspronck painted a group portrait of regentesses in 1642, but I have neither a reproduction of the work nor an adequate description of it. My sparse notes are essentially limited to the observation that the artist was little more than a colorless and uninventive imitator of Hals.

More significant is the reaction of the officers of the Saint Hadrian's civic guard in deciding to commission another large civic guard group portrait in the very next year, 1642. The person appointed to carry it out was not Hals, but, astoundingly enough, Pieter Soutman, who had played a certain role in the establishment of Rubens' school for engravers and was later known in Haarlem as a competent businessman. The resulting work — which, like all the other examples of Haarlem group portraiture discussed here, is located in the City Museum — appears to be the epitome of a reactionary painting. In regard to pictorial conception, the internal coherence is again restricted to a single subgroup of two or three figures, which, although located prominently in the middle of the painting, does not include the captain. The remaining men are apathetically standing or sitting around on view. Soutman's composition keeps the figures, as well as the lances and all the other stafflike props, in a fairly symmetrical arrangement, whereas his treatment of the free space behind them is perfunctory. The whole painting is a protest against self-contained internal coherence and the emancipation of free space in the form of chiaroscuro. The only hints that we are dealing with the work of a townsman of Hals are the congenial faces of the figures, which occasionally still exhibit a trace of lively humor.

The guardsmen of Haarlem at the time must have been quite satisfied with Soutman's solution, because only two years later they commissioned him to do another large civic guard group portrait. Presumably emboldened by his success in 1642, Soutman endowed several of the heads with van Dyck's brand of pathos (showing conflict between will and emotion). They clash with the rest of the painting, which is otherwise informed by Hals's earlier pictorial conception, leaving an impression that is disagreeable, and probably not only to our modern eyes.

This type of intense, emotional painting, which Soutman had learned during his stay in Antwerp, seems to have satisfied his contemporaries' demands, at least to some extent. His painting of 1644, however, seems to have made his contemporaries' realize that civic guard group portraits were no longer a suitable medium for the most recent tastes for art in Haarlem, because it is the last of its kind. After this, the records of Haarlem make no mention either of commissions for group portraits or of the name of the last artist in the city to produce one.

The Last Period of Group Portraiture in Haarlem, 1658–1667

It was not until the end of the 1650s that artists in Haarlem again took up the challenge of group portrait painting, this time confining themselves to regents. This is the last fruitful and to a certain extent the last autonomous period that this genre can boast in Holland's oldest cultural center. Lasting from 1658 until 1667, it reflects a significant new phase in the evolution of Holland's artistic volition. That is why it warrants a closer look here than is generally granted.

Jacob van Loo

The group portrait of the regents of the Aalmoeseniers Arm- en Werkhuis by Jacob van Loo is dated 1658 (fig. 78). The pictorial conception divides the painting into two actions. A servant enters from left and introduces a girl in need of assistance to the treasurer sitting behind the table; as he does so, he hands over a piece of paper, which the treasurer accepts while listening to the servant's explanation. Meanwhile, the two regents seated to either side of the table turn to an unseen party (the viewer), with whom they are separately negotiating; and, because the regent on the left is pointing with his left hand at the treasurer in the background, a direct connection is created between both groups and both activities.

This is the pictorial conception first used by Hals in his civic guard group portrait of 1616: one distinct subgroup in charge of internal coherence and another responsible for external coherence, though both are connected in time and place. Like Soutman before him, van Loo was reverting to early Hals, more or less in protest against the completely self-contained internal coherence of Hals's later regent portrait of 1641. It was obviously the dramatic conflict that Hals had taken over from Rembrandt and artists of Amsterdam that displeased his Haarlem colleagues. The element of drama, therefore, was again eliminated. It was, however, not replaced by the pleasant camaraderie and good humor of Hals's works of the 1620s and 1630s. The regents here do not look either as inviting or as challenging as Hals's figures or as sympathetic and compassionate as the ones we know from Amsterdam. In a cool, calculated, and business-like manner, they inspect the unseen party.

The background scene of self-contained internal coherence has even more striking differences. Here, too, even though the subject virtually demands it, warmth of feeling is completely lacking; however, this is where the attentive viewer feels compelled to explore further. A look at the servant and then at the regent gives one the impression of an invisible web of rapport being spun between the two men. One's attention then shifts again to the girl who is looking up, half curiously, half fearfully, at the treasurer. We are aware of the web of thoughts spun among these three people, and we observe it with pleasurable attentiveness, just as they, too, are joined to each other by pure states of attentiveness. It seems as though we are looking at a painted novella of the kind produced unsurpassedly by Gerard Terborch. It was, in fact, this tendency in the painting of Holland, as represented by Terborch, that was beginning to influence group portraits such as this.

The Essence of Novella-Like Group Portraiture in This Period

One should never forget that the unshakable goal of all painting in Holland was the depiction of attentiveness. So, when Hollanders took over the idea of depicting emotions from Italian artists, it was only for the sake of making a figure's attentiveness more specific. The joy expressed by Hals's figures and the compassion of Rembrandt's were only means to an end. As soon as that goal was achieved, or at least reduced to a bare minimum, artists naturally

Fig. 78. Jacob van Loo
The Regents of the Aalmoeseniers Arm- en Werkhuis, 1658
Haarlem, City Museum

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began to eliminate, whenever possible, this superfluous emotion that had always been a foreign import. This reductive process, which is characteristic of the last independent stage of painting in Holland before it capitulated to French influence, grew out of Terborch's pictorial conception.

Terborch's artistic roots were in Haarlem. Through society painters, especially Pieter Codde, the artist is linked with Hals. Consequently, he was trained to paint exuberance, not compassion. Now, however, the challenge was to contain the exuberance of the figures as much as possible in favor of pure attentiveness without sacrificing the new individuality of attentiveness. Terborch met this challenge with his "novella" pictures, which continue to fascinate us today because of the way the figures are bound to each other by unseen but irresistible ties that communicate a compelling mood. These ties seem at first to be none other than the bonds of pure attentiveness. The artist's subtle interpretation of the figures ultimately destroys the purity of their attentiveness, however, because it supplies each of them with a degree of individualized — and therefore, by definition, selfish — motivation. In addition, more detailed psychological analysis of the figures suggests that the motivating factor is pleasure, concealed beneath a facade of disinterested attentiveness. This is obvious even from Terborch's choice of subjects: scenes involving a love letter, or showing a soldier offering a lady some money, or featuring the "paternal admonition." In all cases, secret passions are involved, which the artist delighted in disguising in the cleverest ways. Subjectivity is triumphant in Terborch's paintings, as proven by the modern enthusiasm for his work (for example, Fromentin's): they trigger our stock of associations to such an extent that, as viewers, we can readily imagine ourselves personally witnessing such a scene.

Terborch's art, therefore, seems to represent the most mature and developed stage of art in Holland. The attentiveness of his figures seems to be more perfected than ever before; however, it is also more individualized than at any time in the past. We realize that this is not genuine, disinterested attentiveness, but only its semblance, behind which selfish motivations — secret pleasures — are hidden. Individualism, by its nature, always involves some degree of selfishness. Consequently, Terborch's art, though it may seem to represent the acme of the artistic evolution in Holland, is actually further away from Holland's original artistic ideal — selfless attentiveness — than any earlier stage. This is also confirmed by the observation that the figures in Terborch's paintings not only lack all expression of compassion of the poignant kind found in Rembrandt's work, but they do not even have the sense of humor that Hals used to temper the pleasure-seeking ways of his merry guardsmen. Terborch's figures, finally, do not even have a trace of the congeniality that had been a specific component of Germanic (as opposed to Romance) artistic psychology since the time of Geertgen tot Sint Jans.

The pictorial conceptions of Terborch's novellas have something caustic and sarcastic about them: the artist mocks the secret passions that people have, and encourages the viewer to do the same. Adriaen van Ostade, by contrast, always begged indulgence for his bawdy peasant types, pleading that

they simply could not help themselves. Terborch, on the other hand, is the painter of a witty brand of egoism that uses its knowledge of human weakness not to gain insight into the human condition but to feel superior to other people. This is, as everybody knows, the psychological attitude associated with people from the north of France. And so, as we see the last great, independent artist in Holland already steering in a French direction, the eventual fate of painting in Holland during the last third of the seventeenth century will come as no surprise: its own logical evolution made it inevitable.

The composition of van Loo's regent portrait of 1658 shows figures perfectly rendered as optical phenomena in free space, without these spatial surroundings being individualized. This also recalls the manner of Terborch, who knew perfectly well how to render free space but did so only for the sake of the figures. In the spirit of Romance artists, he was interested only in the human factor, because it allowed him to show off his brilliant wit; the setting, the world in general, on the other hand, did not concern him. In this respect, he distinguishes himself from the artists of Delft, who, though they resemble him in other ways, devote as much individualized attentiveness to the specific rendering of free space and all the other nonhuman aspects of a painting as to the Lord of Creation himself. The overall composition reveals van Loo's regent figures to be unified within an optical plane, albeit in a loose, triangular arrangement that leaves a haptic impression, which is further enhanced by the plainly visible surface of the table, strewn with various objects, acting as a spatial center.

This clearly represents the novella-like pictorial conception that Haarlem wanted to apply to group portraiture. As van Loo attempted it in 1658, however, it had one decided shortcoming: it contained two novellas instead of one. Now, the novella type of pictorial conception is especially vulnerable to anything that might pose a threat to unity; as a result, it became absolutely necessary to drop one of the two novellas — either the internal or external one. It reveals much about the course of the evolution that it was the internal subgroup — which even Hals had felt compelled to retain in 1641 — that was eliminated for the sake of a rigorously executed external coherence. It is also the most illuminating proof that, for Haarlem artists, as for artists throughout Holland, external coherence was the ultimate goal; furthermore, the only reason it had taken them so long to actualize it, following the example of their Amsterdam colleagues, was because they saw a moderate degree of internal coherence as the indispensable prerequisite for attaining that goal. The subtle psychological interpretation of the figures that is an integral part of the novella approach to painting, however, made it possible to integrate figures with each other in internal coherence, as long as they were all looking out at the viewer and making no effort to interact. This is the very solution that van Loo chose in the following year in portraying the regentesses of the same Arm- en Werkhuis of Haarlem: he had three ladies and a servant act out a novella-like scene for the benefit of the viewer.

Jan de Bray

In novella-like genre painting, as in genre painting in general (p. 346), the artist also tends to treat figures so that individual, objective peculiarities are suppressed and become submerged for the viewer in the larger impression of the painting as a whole. Portraiture, however, cannot afford to sacrifice this much of its objective nature — not, that is, if it still intends to remain the rendering of a particular individual. The novella approach is much too effective at engrossing the viewer in the psychological web spun between the figures, with the result that the physical and psychological characteristics of the person portrayed are overlooked.

Haarlem artists must have recognized this dilemma, because by the 1660s there was a new, somewhat reactionary response. One symptom was that even old Frans Hals was again considered suitable to satisfy the Haarlem public. And, in fact, his regents and regentesses of 1664 stand much more on their own as portraits than do the regents of van Loo. Nonetheless, Hals may still have gone further than his patrons wanted him to, in view of the restraint practiced by the most prominent group portrait painter of the 1660s, Jan de Bray. The most mature work of this last of the distinctive portrait painters of Haarlem consists of a pair of paintings portraying the regents (fig. 79) and the regentesses of 1667 (in the City Museum of Haarlem), which to a certain extent double as the final examples of independent group portrait painting in Haarlem.

Very much as in van Loo's painting of 1659, all the regents and regentesses, including the subordinates who are standing by, turn to look in the direction of the viewer (the unseen party), who, to judge from the far greater number of directions in which the figures are looking, by comparison to Rembrandt's syndics, is clearly thought of as being more than one person. In fact, for the modern viewer, these paintings recall not *The Staalmeesters* but much earlier examples of group portrait painting in Amsterdam: the regent portraits by Werner van den Valckert (fig. 40). These paintings represent Amsterdam's resolution of the problem of establishing external coherence (see p. 231). The artists of Amsterdam still lacked convincing internal coherence. This is because not only the chairman but all the men in Valckert's painting have independently taken up contact with the viewer in a way that destroys the impression that all of their actions are occurring at the same time, and that they all share a subordinated relationship to the applicant as mediated by the chairman. Particularly in de Bray's painting of the regentesses, it is evident that the ladies and even the servant are individually, independently active. They may all be looking with alert attentiveness at the viewer, but their hands show that each of them is at the same time busy in her own particular way. This undermines the coherence of the novella element, but the portrait quality of each woman has increased, because the viewer now feels impelled to look at each one individually.

This type of pictorial conception appears in milder form in the painting of the regents (fig. 79) but is still unmistakably present. The recordkeeper, his

quill poised, fixes his gaze on the unseen party, and the man across from him turns so emphatically to face the viewer that he stands out equally strongly: both these figures, moreover, are located in the center of the painting, just where the viewer is likely to look first. One need only compare it to Rembrandt's *Staalmeesters,* in which only the treasurer is recognizable, by his money purse, and then only after a careful search. De Bray's secretary, on the other hand, is the most startling figure in the entire painting. Another point of comparison lies in the hands: in *The Staalmeesters,* they are insignificant second thoughts compared to the important role they play in the works of our representative of late painting in Haarlem.

From all this it is clear that the group portrait painters of Haarlem — who had begun to exploit the advantages of internal coherence in group portraiture in response to Romance influence at a time when the artists of Amsterdam had not even begun to think about them — only now, at the end of the third period, managed to evolve the pictorial conception of their paintings to the stage that the artists in Amsterdam, who always favored external coherence, had reached generally by the end of the second period. Because these two stages were separated by a full forty years of intensive evolution in Hollandish painting, however, the pictorial conceptions were, of course, not completely identical. The progress that had taken place is thus necessarily apparent in the late works of de Bray. And finally, despite the closeness of his pictorial conception to that of Amsterdam's Valckert, de Bray was still a product of his native Haarlem and remained so, as his paintings clearly prove. Therefore, now is a good time to make a clear distinction between the regent portraits of Werner van den Valckert and Jan de Bray, which, on the surface, seem almost identical in conception.

The basic difference is that de Bray's conception, despite his concern with maintaining portrait quality, is nevertheless one of the novella type, while Valckert's has at least some potential for dramatic conflict of the sort we associate with Rembrandt. As noted above, the hands of de Bray's regents figure much more prominently than do those of the syndics; however, when we compare the relationship of hands to heads in de Bray's and Valckert's regents, we find that the hands of de Bray's regents and regentesses are the less prominent ones, all of them arranged more or less along a line paralleling the surface of the table. The heads, on the other hand, project individually, contrasting with the background so that they easily assert their claim to the viewer's undivided attention. De Bray, however, in his preoccupation with situating and relating the figures' attentiveness in a single, particularized moment of time, did not subtly differentiate either their physical movements or psychological character. Once again, we see how, when an artist excludes expressions of pleasure and emotion in favor of a purely subjective attentiveness, portrait quality immediately declines. The states of attentiveness of the five or six people in this painting appear monotonous to us today. Whereas Rembrandt's addition of a subtle dramatic component lends the individual heads of *The Staalmeesters* enormous interest so that they complement and enhance each other,

Fig. 79. Jan de Bray
The Regents of the Leper Hospital, 1667
Haarlem, City Museum

the uniformity of de Bray's regents makes them cancel each other out. The novella approach of this last stage of group portraiture in Haarlem, however, required that the figures have uniform states of attentiveness on a psychological level. That, of course, eliminated the most engaging aspect of the approach—the charm of Terborch's novellas—because, since all the regents were restricted to interacting with the unseen party, there was not much room left over for storytelling. Paintings such as these, however well painted, prove how the general evolution in art had progressed in a direction that group portraiture fundamentally could not follow. Painters in Holland now had a choice: they could either continue to pursue the novella-like, dramatic approach and give up group portraiture, or, unwilling to abandon the category of art most typical of Holland, they could put a halt to their own development and forgo all hopes of creative participation in the history of painting for centuries to come. As is well known, the Hollanders chose the latter.

Finally, the novella approach, with its pressure to make the figures physically and psychologically uniform, also explains de Bray's resistance to any form of subordination within the group of regents—an attitude that at the same time points back to his roots in Haarlem. Now, Valckert also had an interest in coordinating his regents; nevertheless, it is still easy for us to pick out which of them is the presiding officer interrogating the unseen party. That is not the case in de Bray's portrait of the male regents: it takes quite a while before we guess that the man sitting on the extreme right must be the one in charge. The situation with the regentesses is even more difficult, and we can only assume that the most likely candidate for their advocate is the woman seated on the extreme left, with her mouth half-open.

Accordingly, the differences between the pictorial conceptions of Valckert and de Bray can be characterized as follows: whereas external coherence in the work of Valckert, as an artist of Amsterdam, already shows signs of the subsequent adoption of a dramatic component and of relative subordination as a means of enhancing internal coherence, de Bray of Haarlem, on the other hand, tried to rid his work of the remnants of internal coherence based on subordination that he had inherited from the evolution that immediately preceded him. It is from this vantage point, at the end of the process, that we can best understand why Hals's regents portrait of 1641 was so vehemently rejected by the people of Haarlem. It was obviously the suggestion of dramatic conflict in the painting that they found so intolerable and that caused Hals's complete fall from grace. Moreover, Hals's skill in steering clear of another device no less loathsome to his Haarlem patrons, namely, subordination, did not help him in the least.

The composition of de Bray's regent portraits of 1667 is also best understood when compared to Valckert's of 1624. In contrast to van Loo and Hals, but similarly to Valckert, de Bray has once again begun to stress the figures' tangible physical appearance, as evidenced by the flickering highlights of the figures' eyes, which take on a sculptural relief quality reminiscent of the Flemish manner. The haptic effect is further enhanced by the light

background, which strikes one as new and significant, particularly in de Bray's portrait of the male regents, as compared to those in van Loo's and Hals's paintings.

Nevertheless, closer examination of the two works by de Bray and Valckert makes it plainly clear that they are separated not by one, but by two generations. The table may still function as a spatial center in de Bray's work, but its surface is now barely visible, and the figures are seated so convincingly around it that the impression they make of being arranged in an optical plane, when seen as a whole, is able to hold its own next to *The Staalmeesters*. But de Bray's composition progressed even farther: the axes of the figures are so delicately balanced out by diagonals that the planar composition, as a whole, is absolutely tranquil. The figures in the portrait of the male regents, in particular, create six axes divided into three pairs: the middle pair converging, the lateral two diverging, so that, counting from right, the axes of the first and fourth regents plus the servant run parallel to each other in one direction, while those of the second, third, and fifth regents run parallel in the other. The situation is similar in the portrait of the regentesses.

De Bray took at least enough care in rendering space that even modern observers with a fundamentally subjective, optical approach to painting will find nothing objectionable about the way he depicted it. Like a Romance artist, however, he does not allow the space to dominate; rather, it plays a role secondary to that of the haptic plane. The free space appears to connect everything together; for that very reason, it should not be read as being autonomous. De Bray ignores as much as possible all the aspects of the setting that do not directly concern the figures: in the portrait of the male regents, there is not even any indication of a wall in the background, which consists instead of a kind of bright glow turning slightly darker around the edges. This represents a continuation of the chiaroscuro practiced by artists in Delft, proving to us once again that chiaroscuro as used in Holland was only a means of visually rendering space. The background of the portrait of the regentesses, on the other hand, is mostly draped with cloth. This is, of course, nothing more than one of those convenient stopgap measures used by academic artists ever since the sixteenth century whenever they wished to give some indication of space and surroundings beyond the figures but without taking the trouble to render them. From the perspective both of the composition and the monotonous pictorial conception, group portrait painting in Haarlem thus reached the final, Academic stage of its existence.

In Retrospect

Having reached this final stage, we have also achieved the goal that we set out to accomplish (see p. 308), namely, to trace the evolution of the group portrait painting of Holland in its two most significant centers — Amsterdam and Haarlem — by concentrating primarily on the three periods whose artistic intention corresponds most closely to our modern artistic volition, as opposed to the Academic style (despite the latter's closer proximity chrono-

Fig. 80. Anonymous Hollandish
Pen-and-ink drawing with wash, around 1650
Vienna, Albertina

logically). Here, from our standpoint looking back over a century and a half, it is important to remind ourselves that the three periods we have investigated — the symbolic, the genre, and the dramatic novella — basically form one single episode of art history taken as a whole, merely representing various phases in the evolution of one and the same art-historical phenomenon, which consists essentially of the painting of free space and attentiveness. Both aspects, condensed further, might be referred to as the painting of subjectivized objectivism.

Life is a constant struggle between the individual ego and the surrounding world, between subject and object. Civilized human beings are not content with a passive role in relation to the objective world, with its power to influence every aspect of life. Art (in its broadest sense) allows them to replace the objective world that is beyond their control with an alternative realm that they can freely define on their own terms.

Historically, there have been two extreme points of view about the relationship between subject and object. The initial position was that every subject is an object, therefore only objects exist. Today, the reverse applies: objects exist only as a function of the subject. The transition from the earlier to the later point of view is documented, step by step, by the art of classical antiquity, the Christian Middle Ages, the Renaissance and Baroque periods, and even by the art of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Holland, which forms just one link — albeit an exceedingly significant and noteworthy one — in the long chain of evolution. The artists of Holland were the first to realize that the viewing subject can take mental control over all the objects in a painting by making them part of the viewing subject's own consciousness. Accordingly, they were the first to paint intentionally in a manner that suggests things to the viewer as generalized mental representations rather than through specific sensory responses (specifically tactile, but also visual).

Physically, this meant rendering things in terms of space; but not the confined, cubic sort with hard surfaces that trigger our sense of touch. Artists in Holland preferred undelimited free space that is reconciled with the shapes of individual objects as much as possible. Then, on the psychological level (obviously restricted to the humans in a painting), this meant depicting attentiveness, which is essentially a state of the human mind devoid of will and emotion. This explains, on the one hand, the old and enduring aversion that the Hollanders had to depicting self-contained, historical events: history painting requires that figures interact, therefore making it very difficult for them to be depicted in a pure state of attentiveness. On the other hand, it also explains the preference in Holland for both individual and group portraiture, because it is a type of painting that exists solely in terms of the mental representations of the viewing subject.

In conclusion, a few examples will help us briefly summarize the three stages in the evolution of the Hollandish art of painting free space and attentiveness. First, representing the symbolic period, is the "calculator" in Dirk Jacobsz. (fig. 11) whose attention is focused at some undefined point in the

distance, and therefore is still very generalized. The numbers on the table are the object of his attention but, because he is ignoring them, they take on merely symbolic significance. Going along with this, we observed a similar disconnectedness in the physical composition between the self-contained figure in the foreground and the surrounding free space.

The second, genre period of the evolution is exemplified by the various "calculators" that repeatedly appear in group portraits (figs. 36, 39). Here, hand gestures typically take the place of symbols, and even if the bookkeepers, as they calculate in their heads, are still not focusing on what their hands are doing, it no longer looks as implausible or inconsistent as it had earlier, because it is possible for a human being to perform both activities at the same time. Our observation of other group portraits of the same period showed us the same narrowing relationship between figure and free space: as the solid figures become more insubstantial, the free space accrues in substance.

Finally, the most mature stage in the evolution is populated by figures like the man looking through an open door in a drawing in the Albertina (fig. 80). As had been the rule in Romance art for some time, the figure's attentiveness is again firmly and unambiguously united in internal coherence with something specific (in this case, say, the corridor beyond the door). Whatever that specific something may be, however, it remains undepicted, and the viewer is forced to imagine it. Likewise, the man's eyes are not depicted, only his back. But this is rendered in such a suggestive way that the viewer is inspired to search his or her personal experience and come up with an idea of what the figure is "attentive to." Precisely the same type of seemingly trivial and insignificant figure appears countless times in paintings from Holland of the 1640s and 1650s. For example, a "fisherman," who on the surface is concentrating on a particular object (the unseen fish) but is in actuality sparking a sense of great anticipation in the viewer's imagination. Or, shall we say, a "seamstress" whose tiny stitches the viewer hardly notices because of the convincing and skillful way she is shown completely absorbed in her own task. The compositions of this period run a parallel course: on the one hand, the individual figures are shown in high relief with a palpable presence, but, at the same time, they merge easily with the surrounding free space. The figures within the group reassert the linear composition along the picture surface at the same time as they succeed in transforming the objective, geometric, haptic plane into a subjective, optical one.

Notes

1. "Ein Votivbild des XV. Jahrhunderts," *Schlesiens Vorzeit in Bild und Schrift,* n.s., 1:103.

2. This particular, more intimate form of attentiveness is what distinguishes the dedicatory procession on the Ara Pacis Augustae from the Panathenaic procession. In the Greek example, physical action is favored at the expense of the psychological aspects of the figures — a fact that has received surprisingly little attention. States of attentiveness are best expressed by the eyes, and that is why the Roman Imperial period granted them an unprecedented status that proved to be of great import for the distant future, especially for Christian art. The Roman Imperial period was the first bold enough to allow figures' gazes to diverge from the orientation of their heads; this accorded the eyes, along with the expression of attentiveness that went along with them, an autonomous significance distinct from the expression of will associated with the body.

3. The gradual advent of action and subordination is easiest to trace in the history of the *sacra conversazione,* the theme that held onto medieval notions longer and more persistently than others in Southern art.

4. Even in the burial scene, the action is presented in terms of emotion and attentiveness. A good illustration of this is the Christ-like figure who is pointing to the sarcophagus, as though drawing it to the attention of the men bearing the corpse. This device of making an action look like a direct reaction to spoken words (a command, for example), and thereby calling attention to its psychological origins, was frequently used by Rembrandt later, the most famous example being *The Night Watch*. The ones with a solution closest to Geertgen's, however, are those in Munich in the collection of Prince Frederick Henry of Orange, which we will discuss later.

5. The unusual foreshortening of the head of the more distant henchman, which he inclines in the direction of the viewer as he shovels some bones onto the fire, merits further discussion. Geertgen seems to have been fond of this kind of foreshortening, because there are two other instances of it in the painting: the knight discussed earlier who is peering into the sarcophagus, and one of the men placing John the Baptist into the coffin in the background scene.

Perspective — meaning, of course, linear perspective — creates the illusion of space around a figure, and that is why the Italians were so interested in developing it. For the same reason, however, Netherlandish artists had every reason to avoid it, as Geertgen himself did, with this one exception. What, then, did the artist wish to express by this one exception? In my opinion, he chose the motif of the foreshortened head because it gave him the opportunity to suggest the inner life of the figure without

depending on the eyes, which is the main way of expressing attentiveness for all the other figures. And that is also why the Moor, who is the only attendant with his head turned to the side, and who is making animated hand gestures, is seen from behind. Later on, artists in Holland became very fond of foreshortening the heads of figures because it made the challenge of expressing their states of attentiveness a more subtle one. Without the presence of the actual, physical eye, and in the absence of the gaze itself, one is forced to imagine the inner state of the figures based on the shadows that collect above the sockets, a process that took the art of Holland a notch closer to modern subjectivism.

6. The Utrecht paintings have been in Berlin for years for restoration; as a result, I was not able to see the originals. Before the paintings were sent to Berlin, photographs of figures 5 through 7 were taken on the orders of Dr. Hofstede de Groot, whom I would like to thank for his permission to use them.

7. In the French edition of van Mander's *Schilderboek* [*Le livre de peintres de C. van Mander* (Paris: J. Rouam, 1884–85)], Hymans, on page 311, note 4, refers to the Commander of Saint John from where, according to the museum catalog, the painting was moved to the Haarlem Museum.

8. This is the view taken on the authorship of the Utrecht paintings by Carl Justi in his essay on Jan van Scorel in the *Jahrbuch der Königlichen Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 2:193 ff. Because I know the Utrecht paintings only from photographs, I hesitate to question their attribution to Scorel, especially since it would be difficult to find another artist whose hand reveals both a portrait painter of such skill and one who had spent time in Italy. Still, I cannot ignore the fact that the coat of arms associated with Scorel in the Utrecht painting (fig. 6, fifth head on the right), while no doubt similar to the one next to the artist's portrait in the authenticated Haarlem painting (fig. 1, the third head from the right), is by no means identical to it. This might imply that the artist of the Utrecht painting was not completely familiar with Scorel's coat of arms, and therefore that he was not Scorel himself. The facial features of the two figures are also not much help, at least for the moment, since Scorel's head in the Utrecht painting is heavily overpainted and hard to see in the photograph. Again, I cannot help pointing out that, to my mind, the head of the person in the Utrecht painting to the right of the one designated as Scorel is more like the authenticated Scorel head in the Haarlem painting than the overpainted one we have just been discussing. The question arises as to whether the coats of arms and accompanying texts of the Utrecht painting were not subsequent additions or complete restorations of a later time. The current restoration may provide a definite answer.

9. A good example is the *Portrait of a Gentleman* from the auction sale of the Doetsch collection in London, which Berenson, *Italienische Kunst* [Leipzig: H. Seemann Nachfolger, 1902], 114 ff. (with reproduction), considers a copy after Giorgione.

10. The reason this hand gesture looks so self-conscious and artificial is that, at this point, it is still generalized and not yet intended to be read as a momentary, individual gesture. Not until the end of the sixteenth century was group portraiture in Holland ready for the stage of addressing one specific viewing subject in a direct and momentary way. The earliest example is in a work by Pieter Isaacsz. (fig. 29) that we will discuss later.

11. It is hard to say whether the three active characters are also officers. All three of them are distinguished by the chain mail on their shoulders, but then so is the man to the right of the speaker.

12. I am grateful to Mr. E. W. Moes for supplying me with a photographic reproduction of this work, as well as of another from the same location that will be discussed later on.

13. No one is certain which letter this is. Opinions differ between *G, D,* and *H.*

14. As reported by van Mander in his biography of Dirk Jacobsz.'s father in the edition put out by van Hymans [see note 7], 109.

15. J. Six, "Twee Amsterdamsche Schutterstukken te St. Petersburg," *Oud Holland* 13:91 ff., with two plates.

16. As an appendix to his above-cited essay in *Oud Holland* 13:101–8, Six included a useful compilation of the dates from Schaep's and van Dijk's lists involving group portraits commissioned by the three *doelen* [guilds] — the Voetsboogsdoelen [longbowmen's guild], the Handboogsdoelen [crossbowmen's guild], and the Kloveniersdoelen [musketeers' guild]) — in the period before the religious wars, together with the ones from Scheltema's *Beschrijving* and from the Rijksmuseum catalog.

17. Together with Teunissen's painting of 1533, this painting is presently hung so high on the wall of the foyer of the mayor's office in City Hall that it is impossible to study it adequately. Moreover, like most early civic guard group portraits, it is not only monotonous in color but also darkened by dirt. The short time I was allowed to view the work was not enough for me to get a clear idea of it; even the photograph I have is not much help. Because this painting is so vital for an understanding of the entire evolution, I would urgently recommend that it be relocated to the Rijksmuseum and carefully cleaned. The same goes for Teunissen's painting of 1533, which, as we will see, is his only authenticated civic guard group portrait. Both of these works could easily be exchanged for any number of less historically important seventeenth-century civic guard group portraits in the Rijksmuseum, since their sole function in City Hall at the moment is decoration.

18. In the eighteenth century, the portrait was attributed to Dirck Cornelissen; in the nineteenth, for a time (by Scheltema), to Dirk Jacobsz. The ascription to the latter is unfounded, for his known works from the 1550s and 1560s are completely different in style.

19. E. W. Moes, *De Amsterdamsche boekdrukkers en uitgevers in de zestiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: C. L. van Langenhuysen, 1900), 1:196 f.

20. The man in the lower left-hand corner is holding a pair of gloves. This serves not only to draw attention to the hands but also to lend the figure a certain air of refinement, which, from now on, gradually becomes more and more important. In this painting, the pointing seems to be directed at symbols rather than figures.

21. The first appearance of a knife and a herring, albeit out of context, is in the left-hand side panel to Jacobsz.'s earliest painting (fig. 19), dating from the 1550s.

22. This attribution, as mentioned earlier, is based on van Mander's note (Hymans's edition [see note 7], 2:44) which describes the following: "at the Kloveniersdoelen, a squad of men seated at the table, dining on a meal of fish, which in Holland is referred to as '*pors.*'" This is the dish presumed to be on the plate in the middle of the table.

Van Mander mentions two other civic guard group portraits by Barendsz., "at the Voetboogsdoelen, a squad of men, among them a drummer, very well painted" and "at the guild of Saint Sebastian, a fine and splendid painting of a squad, including a few old, sun-tanned boatmen, and, above them in a balcony, a number of men holding a large, silver drinking horn, splendidly and well painted. In this and in other works by his hand, one finds an excellent Titianesque and Italian handling." No paintings that answer these two descriptions have yet been discovered.

23. According to van Mander, Hymans edition [see note 7], 1:353, Aertsen was a pupil of the group portrait painter Allart Claessen in Amsterdam.

24. The increase in the captain's status that followed from the stricter, military sub-ordination of the reformed civic guards during the Wars of Independence is reflected in the way the civic guard group portraits are referred to in the second period as the cap-tain's or lieutenant's company, half company, or corporalship, whereas the earlier ones were designated simply as a "squad" of this or that guild. The names of the guilds, however, which were initially still associated with the civic guards, no longer occur in the titles of civic guard group portraits, particularly in Amsterdam. These are all indi-cations of how drastically the democratic spirit had declined since achieving self-rule.

25. In another civic guard group portrait by Ketel (depicting Captain Herman Rodenborgh Beths and with a self-portrait of the artist), which, unfortunately, we know only from van Mander's account, the figures occupied a gallery decorated with reliefs in the form of herms. Here is another indication of the importance that Ketel attributed to the spatial setting for the overall effect of the painting.

26. Not counting the isolated case of 1531 (fig. 13; see pp. 114 f.).

27. It seems doubtful, however, that it will last forever in view of the fact that contemporary art has gone back to a style somewhat resembling the art of the ancient Near East.

28. In a civic guard group portrait from 1586 (see pp. 185–86); then especially in Frans Hals's work.

29. See de Vries's comment in Taurel, *L'art chrétien en Holland*, as cited by Hymans in his edition of van Mander. I was unable to obtain Taurel's book. Van Mander describes the Rosecrans painting in the section on Ketel's life as follows: "In 1589, he delivered a group portrait of a Handboogsdoelen" (though, according to the Rijksmuseum catalog, it was commissioned by the Voetboogsdoelen), "whose captain was Dirk Rosecrans, life-size, all of the men standing, very beautifully painted and del-icate in appearance, moreover framed in a new and inventive way." If van Mander was referring to a wooden frame, it has not survived. Is it perhaps intended to refer to the way the group portrait is framed by the pavement and the palace, something which would have been truly new and inventive? De Vries's explanation, ibid., for the missing figure on the left was that the painting had been cut down on the left side at a later date. In my opinion, however, Ketel's style is quirky enough to have made him fully capable of such a capricious instance of masking.

30. A civic guard group portrait by Ketel, allegedly dated 1599, is located in the municipal museum of Gouda, the city of the artist's birth. It has eleven figures, shown down to the level of their knees, who are crowded together in two rows in front of a neutral, gray background. All of the heads are looking out toward the viewer, without

any sign of action or subordination. There is, however, a marked increase in the number of extreme positions and contrasted movements, and all of the heads are set at an angle. The heads are very conscientiously rendered and make a lively impression, which would seem to suggest that, toward the end of his career, the artist switched his attention from the depiction of physical movement in space to solving the inherent problems of portrait painting, while still giving the individual figures more flexibility of movement. Ketel, to whom van Mander devoted an unusually long chapter, deserves his own monograph, as he was one of the artists in the vanguard of painting in Holland.

31. *Oud Holland* 15:129 ff., "De Schilderijen in den Handboogsdoelen te Amsterdam, door Ihr. Dr. J. Six." With three plates, the one presumed to be from 1586 on plate I.

32. It is easy to single out the four or five heads that are particularly impressive in their individual presence; however, most of the others are also worthy of psychological analysis.

33. A number of objects underscore the genre quality of the scene, for example, the brass bowl and a second forceps by the feet of the corpse. These are no longer meant symbolically, however, but function as in a still life.

34. Van Mander praises the painting in the following words: "He portrayed from life a corporalship or a squad of guardsmen in a courtyard or in the old guildhall in Haarlem. That was in 1583, the year I went to live in Haarlem, and I was astonished to come across a painter of his standing. The work is very cleverly composed, so that all of the men's characteristic movements and postures and their personal idiosyncrasies come through: for example, those who were much in each other's company are shown extending their hands; the ones who liked to drink are shown with a jug or a glass; and so forth, each according to some distinguishing feature. As a whole, the painting is really extraordinary: the portrait heads are well done, the painting technique impressive and facile; moreover, the clothing, the hands, and everything else live up to the same excellent standard, so that this painting, more than any other, will always be assured a place of honor in Haarlem."

35. The fact that Cornelisz. does not permit the captain to have a subordinating effect on the others — for although his contemporaries must have known him, he has no artistic weight that would allow us securely to identify him — gives us insight into the aversion to subordination characteristic of Holland. As we will see, the artists in Haarlem were even less able than their colleagues in Amsterdam to overcome this.

36. See Six's essay in *Oud Holland* 15, pl. II, cited a number of times earlier [note 31]. The proof is an extant sketch for a painting of the company of Captain Adriaan Pietersz. Raep of 1603.

37. Dr. Hofstede de Groot first pointed this out. The drawing has been published, in considerably reduced form, in *Oud Holland* 6:229.

38. The date of 28(?) November 1630 is located in the gable over the door to left of center, apparently a date of importance to the group that was somehow connected to the commissioning of the group portrait. That is, of course, no definite proof that the drawing predates the painting by two years, but the possibility cannot be denied.

39. De Keyser was not, however, the first to take up the motif. Credit for this goes, significantly, to an artist from Haarlem: not Hals himself, who did not make obvious

use of it until 1639, but one under his influence, namely, Hendrik Pot, whose work will be discussed later on.

40. The preliminary drawing for the civic guard group portrait of 1632 indicates a gable door in the background; however, it was left out in the painting itself.

41. At one point in his book, Neumann complains specifically about what he refers to as the "endless chatter" about space that has broken out in more recent art-historical writing. Other, younger scholars seem inclined to second him. There must be some sort of misunderstanding here. What the visual arts depict, and moreover the only things that it is possible for them to depict, are, first of all, objects, that is, finite planes (extending in two dimensions) or finite space (extending in three dimensions); and secondly, what is outside these objects, that is, either infinite planes or infinite space. The means to these ends are line and color.

According to the modern subjective approach, objects exist purely as subjective color sensations, and no longer as things in themselves, as objects existing outside us. However, this approach can only go so far, namely, to the point where the color of an object becomes so important that one tends to forget its other characteristics. This attitude contrasts drastically, of course, with the overwhelming preoccupation with the tangible qualities of objects in the painting of earlier periods. "Objects" (meaning *extensions*) are still the necessary substrata of color, and color without an object—as a "metaphysical principle," as Neumann would put it—is not possible, at least at the moment. A painted human figure remains just that, a human figure, however strongly its color stimulates the viewer.

For that reason, it is not right to characterize the main problem facing modern art as a problem of color; for color, once again, is merely the means to an end, just as line once was, and has recently once more become. To modern art, the major challenge revolves around problems concerned with space, as it always has: the interaction between the viewing subject, on one hand, and the object (that is, extension, space), on the other, rather than a complete merging of the object in the subject—a situation that would signal the end of the visual arts in general. When modern aesthetics says that objects are colors, what that really means is that objects are plane surfaces: however, not the haptic, polychrome kind associated with the old masters, but the optical, coloristic kind that allows the object to be depicted as a whole together with its surroundings without completely suppressing its individuality. Now, if it is true that not even modern art thinks of objects as purely subjective sensations, how much more unreasonable it is for us to attribute this line of thinking to the artists of an earlier period. The exciting and instructive thing about Baroque art, both in the South and in the North, is that its long, continuous, and yet diverse evolution clearly shows us how the trend toward subjectivity, once it came into being and began to grow, gradually came to grips with the tactile and visible qualities of the object.

42. Artists in Haarlem, however, seem to have been ahead in this respect: a civic guard group portrait by Hals of 1627 already commemorates a specific event, a particular banquet that was held in 1622.

43. Besides the captain and the lieutenant, only two other people in the painting are interacting with each other (in a way that also involves subordination), namely, the two men on the extreme right-hand side. The basic idea seems to be that a subordinate

officer is telling a guardsman to order the unit waiting on the right-hand side to join the middle unit which is already on the move. We will discuss below the role this subgroup of two people plays in the composition.

44. Carl Neumann also recognized and emphasized the subordinate role of the guardsmen; however, he attributed the dominant role in the painting not to the captain and the lieutenant together but to the lieutenant alone. This misinterpretation would be totally incomprehensible, were it not so consistent with Neumann's basic assumption, which is that Rembrandt's exclusive interest was color. For modern viewers, who have been conditioned into thinking that all visual phenomena can be reduced to pure color sensation, the striking yellow of the lieutenant's costume automatically qualifies him as the center of visual attention. Rembrandt's likely reason for choosing yellow in this case, however, was to give the diminutive lieutenant the chance to hold his own against his massive neighbor, so that, together as a unit, they could maintain themselves as the dominant group within the painting as a whole.

Many pages in Neumann's book on Rembrandt show how the modern brand of criticism based on taste has been a boon to art-historical research, for, in inquiring into the likes and dislikes of people in former times, it only makes sense to start by exploring what people consider appealing today, as that is the only way of getting a proper standard of comparison. Be that as it may, his analysis of *The Night Watch* is an example of how things can go awry whenever the attempt is made to foist a modern idea like "issues of color" on an age that represents an entirely different moment in cultural history.

45. The physical movements of Hals's guardsmen suggest a pleasurable state of well-being, something that his fellow Hollanders found so charming for a time. It is a long-acknowledged fact, however, that that was not an option for Rembrandt. The only emotion that he was good at depicting, and that he exploited on a regular basis, was compassion. But because the portrayal of compassion is obviously inappropriate in a scene where guardsmen are about to march off, as is the case in *The Night Watch*, Rembrandt had to turn all physical activity into an expression of pure human will.

46. To a lesser extent, the bust of Caesar on the column, which also appears in other early works (*Ecce Homo, Ship of Fortune*), also functions in this way.

47. One of the heads in the lower left-hand corner of the sketch does seem to be turned toward the viewer. Nevertheless, the position was probably analogous to the one assumed by the surgeon second from left in the foreground of *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*, who still has a direct connection with the speaker in spite of turning away from him. The surgeon is listening so intently to the lecture that he refuses to be distracted even by the sight of the lecturer.

48. In the sketch of *The Preaching of John the Baptist* (Lippmann, *Original Drawings of Rembrandt* [*Harmensz. van Rijn* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1900–1901)], pl. 172a), which was presumably produced at the same time, Rembrandt was apparently trying to transform an oil sketch of the same subject that he had painted twenty years earlier (now in Berlin) into a similar outward effect.

49. That is why the painting has to be viewed from a very specific vantage point, namely, to the left and somewhat below the center. The way it was hung in the

Rijksmuseum two years ago was perfect: there was even a window seat nearby where one could sit and contemplate the painting from its most advantageous angle.

50. The same goes for the overly illuminated face of the regent who is sitting on the extreme left under the window. Had the conception of the painting been more rigorously subjective in the modern sense, the figure would have had to be enveloped in much more shadow.

51. That obviously also explains the numerous *pentimenti*, particularly on the figure of the executioner. The artist tried to soften up the contours, make them less tangible, but was apparently not satisfied with the results.

52. There are certain similarities between figures in this painting and those in van der Helst's civic guard group portrait of 1643, for example, between the man on the left-hand side of Hals's work, who is leaning forward in the midst of an assertion of some kind, and the one on the right-hand side below the stairs in van der Helst's.

53. I recall having seen two more regent portraits by van der Helst in the Rijksmuseum in 1900 that had originally been located in City Hall, but which were not listed in the catalog. One year later, they were, unfortunately, no longer exhibited, so that I was never able to study them closely. I have, however, a reproduction of the one dated 1656. Its pictorial conception represents a remarkable reversion to the old emphasis on external coherence, while the composition seems to have settled into an optical plane. A servant takes up direct contact with the viewer by holding out an inkwell: the idea of allowing the viewer to be subordinated by one figure in the painting is one that Rembrandt no longer found worthy for his *Staalmeesters*. The motif of the servant removing his hat with a flourish of the hand that goes up and back in space, as he extends the inkwell into the foreground at right angles to the picture plane, is apparently copied from one of his own works, *The Schuttersmaltijd* of 1648. Van der Helst probably liked the motif because of the effective way it creates the illusion of depth, and because it provokes the attentiveness of the viewer in a lively way. For Rembrandt, it would have been too overt and too physical for either purpose.

54. Especially as compared with, say, the *staalmeesters* (syndics of the drapers' guild) for whom the clothing is not much more than a necessary evil.

55. The *vanitas*, a favored motif among Romance artists, is therefore nothing more than the Romance counterpart of what Northern artists expressed in terms of humor. Significantly, the *vanitas* motif became popular in Holland only as a result of Romance influence during the Academic period of the last third of the seventeenth century.

56. Holland's indomitable urge not to be the anvil, and yet its unwillingness to be the hammer, explains both the brilliant and the tragic aspects of its history, right up to its most recent fate in South Africa.

57. The painting hangs in such a bad location that there is no chance of taking a proper photograph of it. That is why the reproduction in figure 64 is an engraving made by Reinier Vinkeles in 1769, which E. W. Moes graciously made available to me. The Jewish-looking facial features of the figures spoil it, but that is exclusively the fault of the engraver.

58. As far as I know, this is the first time that this happens; later on, it occurs very frequently: for example, in the work of the Haarlem artist Jacob van Loo, from 1658 (fig. 78), among others. Painters in Amsterdam also take up the motif, very often in

the minor variation where a servant (who has a legitimate place in a corporate group portrait) appears instead of the client. Examples in the Rijksmuseum include Adriaen Backer's *Inspectors of the Medical College,* dated 1683, no. 29 [RM no. SK-C-360]; Jacob Adriaensz. Backer's *Regents of the Work House,* no. 31 [RM no. SK-C-442]; Karel Dujardin's no. 891 [RM no. SK-C-90], dated 1669, and so on.

59. The engraving makes it look as though the fourth regent is pointing with his right hand, which is placed in a book, as a way of attracting the viewer's attention. The detail is inaccurate, however, and distorts the whole meaning of the image: in the original painting, the regent is holding his finger in a relaxed curve, implying that he is lost in thought, and not, at the moment, exercising his will in any way.

60. And in so doing, he crosses his hand over his neighbor's arm, a motif peculiar to Haarlem that occurs quite frequently; see especially Grebber's painting of 1610 (pp. 215 ff.).

61. Carl Neumann, *Rembrandt* [Berlin: Spemann, 1902], 140, saw this, too, as a pure color phenomenon in the modern sense—a viewpoint with which I strongly disagree; see my argument in note 44.

62. Of the various details, a comparison of the hands provides us with the most insight into the differences. Those of Hals's figures suggest an agreeable ease of movement and are therefore rendered in a relatively haptic way. Even the reserved treasurer's hands imply a certain degree of alertness and willingness to act. Those of de Keyser's figures, on the other hand, have a low-keyed, optical quality. Even the hands of the figure to extreme left, who is caught in midspeech, look limp and lethargic.

63. The red is used in the familiar way as an occasional accent: on the knee of the regent on the extreme right-hand side and on the edge of the book lying on the regentesses' table.

Illustration Credits

The attributions, dates, titles, and locations in the figure captions of this translation are those given in Alois Riegl, "Das holländische Gruppenporträt," *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 23, nos. 3–4 (1902). The current information provided below was obtained from the institutions that supplied photographs.

fig. 1   Jan van Scorel (1495–1562), *The Haarlem Knightly Brotherhood of the Holy Land*, 1527/1528, panel, 114.5 × 276 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals-museum, inv. no. os I-310.

figs. 2–4   Geertgen tot Sint Jans (ca. 1465–ca. 1495), *The Legend of Saint John the Baptist*, 1484 or later, oak panel, 172 × 139 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Gemäldegalerie, inv. no. 993.

fig. 5   Jan van Scorel (1495–1562), *Portraits of Twelve Members of the Utrecht Jerusalem Brotherhood*, after 1525, panel, 45.8 × 275.7 cm. Utrecht, Centraal Museum, inv. no. 2378.

fig. 6   Jan van Scorel (1495–1562), *Portraits of Twelve Members of the Utrecht Jerusalem Brotherhood*, after 1525, panel, 48 × 275.8 cm. Utrecht, Centraal Museum, inv. no. 2379.

fig. 7   Jan van Scorel (1495–1562), *Portraits of Nine Members of the Utrecht Jerusalem Brotherhood*, ca. 1535, panel, 47.3 × 247.1 cm. Utrecht, Centraal Museum, inv. no. 2377.

> Note: Riegl describes the left and right halves as separate panels and identifies the sides incorrectly. The translation has been modified to reflect the correct arrangement of the sitters.

fig. 8   Jan van Scorel (1495–1562), *Portraits of Five Members of the Utrecht Jerusalem Brotherhood*, 1541, panel, 78.5 × 164.1 cm. Utrecht, Centraal Museum, inv. no. 2376.

> Note: Riegl gives the artist as Anthonis Mor.

figs. 9, 10   Domenico Robusti, called Tintoretto (1560–1635), *Group Portrait of the Confraternity of the Scuola dei Mercanti*, after 1591, canvas, 330 × 194 cm each. Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia, inv. nos. 973 and 974. Photos: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.

fig. 11   Barthel Beham (1502–1540), *Portrait of a Referee Noting Points in a Game*, 1529, limewood, 84.8 × 66 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches

Museum, Gemäldegalerie, inv. no. 783. Photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, N.Y.

Note: Riegl gives the artist as Dirk Jacobsz.

fig. 12   Dirk Jacobsz. (1497–1567), *A Group of Guardsmen*, 1529, central panel of triptych (the side panels were added later by the artist; see figures 19, 20), panel, 122 × 184 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-C-402.

fig. 13   Cornelis Anthonisz. (ca. 1499–1553), *Seventeen Members of Squad A of the Amsterdam Musketeers' Civic Guard*, 1531, panel, 115 × 195 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7278.

Note: Riegl refers to Cornelis Anthonisz. by a variant name, Cornelis Teunissen.

fig. 14   Cornelis Anthonisz. (ca. 1499–1553), *Banquet of Seventeen Members of the Crossbowmen's Civic Guard (Saint George Guard)*, known as *The Banquet of the Copper Coin*, 1533, panel, 130 × 206.5 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7279.

Note: Riegl refers to Cornelis Anthonisz. by a variant name, Cornelis Teunissen.

fig. 15   Dirk Jacobsz. (1497–1567), *Group Portrait of the Amsterdam Musketeers' Civic Guard*, 1532, canvas (transferred from panel in 1879), 115 × 160 cm. Saint Petersburg, The Hermitage Museum, inv. no. ГЗ 414.

fig. 16   Attributed to Allaert Claesz. (active 1508–1534), *Eighteen Guardsmen of the Musketeers' Civic Guard*, 1534, panel, 125 × 225 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7300.

Note: A cleaning subsequent to the publication of Riegl's work revealed the landscape visible in our illustration.

fig. 17   Unknown artist (formerly attributed to Dirk Jacobsz.), *Twenty-one Guardsmen from Squad E of the Crossbowmen's Civic Guard (Saint George Guard)*, 1554, oak panel, 131.5 × 175.5 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7345.

fig. 18   Unknown artist (formerly attributed to Dirk Jacobsz.), *Seventeen Guardsmen from Squad F of the Amsterdam Musketeers' Civic Guard*, 1557, oak panel, 133 × 169.5 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7344.

figs. 19, 20   Dirk Jacobsz. (1497–1567), *A Group of Guardsmen* (left and right panels of figure 12), 1550–1560, panel, 120 × 78 cm each. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-C-402.

fig. 21   Dirk Jacobsz. (1497–1567), *Twelve Guardsmen from Squad E of the Amsterdam Musketeers' Civic Guard*, 1563, oak panel, 92.5 × 178 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7342.

fig. 22   Dirk Jacobsz. (1497–1567), *Group Portrait of the Amsterdam Musketeers' Civic Guard*, 1561, oak panel, 91 × 184.5 cm. Saint Petersburg, The Hermitage Museum, inv. ГЗ 416.

fig. 23   Dirck Barendsz. (1534–1592), *Fourteen Guardsmen of Squad G of Amsterdam,* 1562, panel, 143 × 183 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7287.

fig. 24   Dirck Barendsz. (1534–1592), *Banquet of Eighteen Guardsmen of Squad L of Amsterdam,* known as *The Perch Eaters,* 1566, panel, 120 × 295 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-C-365.

fig. 25   Pieter Aertsen (1508–1575), *Market Scene,* ca. 1560/1565, oak panel, 91 × 112 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Gemäldegalerie, inv. no. 960.

fig. 26   Pieter Pietersz. the Elder (1540–1603), *Lovers in the Inn,* fourth quarter of the sixteenth century, oak panel, 62 × 83 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Gemäldegalerie, inv. no. 3572.

            Note: Riegl gives the artist as Pieter Aertsen.

fig. 27   Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), *Shepherd Embracing Young Woman,* 1638/1640, oak panel, 162 × 134 cm. Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, inv. no. 328.

fig. 28   Cornelis Ketel (1548–1616), *The Company of Captain Dirck Jacobsz. Rosencrans and Lieutenant Pauw,* 1588, canvas, 208 × 410 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. SK-C-378.

fig. 29   Pieter Isaacsz. (1569–1625), *The Company of Captain Jacob Gerritsz. Hoinck and Lieutenant Wybrand Appelman,* 1596, canvas, 171 × 502 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7338.

fig. 30   Aert Pietersz. (ca. 1550–1612), *The Company of Captain Jan de Bisschop and Standard-Bearer Pieter Vinck,* 1599, oak panel, 133 × 362 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7386.

fig. 31   Aert Pietersz. (ca. 1550–1612), *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Sebastiaen Egbertsz. de Vrij,* 1603, canvas, 147 × 392 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7387.

fig. 32   Pieter Pietersz. the Elder (1540–1603), *Six Wardens of the Drapers' Guild,* 1599, panel, 108 × 143 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-A-865.

fig. 33   Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem (1562–1638), *Banquet of the Guardsmen of the Civic Guard of Saint George and Saint Hadrian,* 1583, panel, 135 × 233 cm (before restoration). Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum, inv. no. os I-48. Photo: Tom Haartsen.

fig. 34   Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem (1562–1638), *Banquet of Officers and Junior Officers of the Civic Guard of Saint Hadrian, after a Parrot Shooting,* 1597–1600, panel, 156.5 × 222 cm. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum, inv. no. os I-53. Photo: Tom Haartsen.

fig. 35   Frans Pietersz. de Grebber (1573–1649), *Banquet of the Officers and Junior Officers of the Civic Guard of Saint George,* 1619, canvas, 206.5 × 500 cm. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum, inv. no. os I-99. Photo: Tom Haartsen.

fig. 36   Jan Tengnagel (1584–1635), *Banquet of Seventeen Members of the Crossbowmen's Civic Guard Company of Captain Geurt van Beuningen,*

1613, canvas, 155 × 264 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. SK-C-407.

fig. 37   Cornelis van der Voort (ca. 1576–1624), *The Regents of the Home for the Aged,* 1618, canvas, 152 × 200 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7436.

fig. 38   Cornelis van der Voort (ca. 1576–1624), *The Company of Lieutenant Pieter Dircksz. Hasselaer,* 1623, canvas, 184 × 259 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 9909.

fig. 39   Frans Badens (1571–1618), *Officers and Men of the Company of Arent ten Grootenhuys and Lieutenant Hanning Florisz. Cloeck,* ca. 1613, canvas, 186 × 362 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7258.

fig. 40   Werner Jacobsz. van den Valckert (1580/1585 – ca. 1627), *Four Regents and the Housemaster of the Amsterdam Lepers' Asylum,* 1624, panel, 137.5 × 209 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. SK-C-417.

fig. 41   Werner Jacobsz. van den Valckert (1580/1585 – ca. 1627), *The Company of Captain Albert Coenraetsz. Burgh and Lieutenant Pieter Evertsz. Hulft,* 1625, oak panel, 169.5 × 270 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7420.

fig. 42   Nicolaes Eliasz. Pickenoy (1588–1650/1656), *Four Regents and the Accountant of the Workhouse,* 1628, canvas, 178 × 233 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7310.

fig. 43   Thomas de Keyser (1596/1597–1667), *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Sebastiaen Egbertsz. de Vrij,* 1619, canvas, 135 × 186 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7352.

fig. 44   Thomas de Keyser (1596/1597–1667), *The Company of Captain Allaert Cloeck and Lieutenant Lucas Jacobsz. Rotgans,* 1632, canvas, 220 × 351 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-C-381.

fig. 45   Thomas de Keyser (1596/1597–1667), *Sketch for the Company of Captain Allaert Cloeck,* 27 November 1630(?), brown pen, violet wash, with penciled grid, 20.7 × 40.9 cm. Vienna, formerly Graphische Sammlung Albertina, inv. no. 9246; destroyed by fire during World War II.

fig. 46   Thomas de Keyser (1596/1597–1667), *The Company of Captain Jacob Symonsz. de Vries and Lieutenant Dirck de Graeff,* 1633, canvas, 198 × 604 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7354.

fig. 47   Thomas de Keyser (1596/1597–1667), *The Burgomasters of Amsterdam Learning of the Arrival of Marie de Médicis,* after 1638, panel, 28.5 × 38 cm. The Hague, Mauritshuis, cat. no. 78.

fig. 48   Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (1606–1669), *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp,* 1632, canvas, 169.5 × 216.5 cm. The Hague, Mauritshuis, cat. no. 146.

fig. 49   Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (1606–1669), *The Company of Captain Frans Banning Cocq and Lieutenant Willem van Ruytenburch,* known

as *The Night Watch*, 1642, canvas, 363 × 437 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. SK-C-5.

fig. 50 Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (1606–1669), *The Raising of the Cross*, ca. 1633–1635, black chalk, gray and gray-brown wash, 23.1 × 18.7 cm. Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, inv. no. 9396.

fig. 51 Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (1606–1669), *Joseph Distributing Corn*, ca. 1637, black chalk on two pieces of paper pasted together, 31.5 × 46.2 cm. Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, inv. no. 17.559.

fig. 52 Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (1606–1669), sketch for *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Joan Deyman*, 1656, pen and pencil in gray-black ink, very lightly washed, 10.9 × 13.1 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7395.

fig. 53 Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (1606–1669), *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Joan Deyman*, 1656, canvas, 100 × 134 cm. Fragment; most of the original painting was lost in a fire on 8 November 1723. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7394.

fig. 54 Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (1606–1669), *The Syndics: The Sampling Officials (Wardens) of the Amsterdam Drapers' Guild*, 1662, canvas, 191.5 × 279 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-C-6.

fig. 55 Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (1606–1669), *The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist*, 1640, drypoint etching. Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, inv. no. 177–178/1926.

fig. 56 Rembrandt, school of, *The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist*, ca. 1650, brown pen, brown wash, and white paint, 17.6 × 26.6 cm. Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, inv. 8796. HdG 1415. Original lost.

fig. 57 Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (1606–1669), *The Small Circumcision*, ca. 1630, drypoint etching. Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, inv. no. 90/1926.

fig. 58 Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (1606–1669), *The Circumcision (in the Stable)*, 1654, drypoint etching. Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, inv. no. 86–87/1926.

fig. 59 Bartholomeus van der Helst (ca. 1613–1670), *The Company of Captain Roelof Bicker and Lieutenant Jan Michielsz. Blaeuw in Front of the de Haan Brewery at the Corner of the Geldersekade and the Boomsloot*, known as *The Lastage*, 1639, canvas, 235 × 750 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-C-375.

fig. 60 Bartholomeus van der Helst (ca. 1613–1670), *The Celebration of the Peace of Münster, 18 June 1648, in the Headquarters of the Amsterdam Crossbowmen's Civic Guard (Saint George Guard)*, 1648, canvas, 232 × 547 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-C-2.

fig. 61 Bartholomeus van der Helst (ca. 1613–1670), *The Four Governors of the Amsterdam Crossbowmen's Civic Guard (Saint Sebastian Guard)*, 1653, canvas, 183 × 268 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-C-3.

fig. 62   Govert Flinck (1615–1660), *Four Governors of the Musketeers' Civic Guard*, 1642, canvas, 203 × 270 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-C-370.

fig. 63   Govert Flinck (1615–1660), *The Amsterdam Civic Guard Celebrating the Signing of the Peace of Münster*, 1648, canvas, 265 × 513 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7318.

fig. 64   Reinier Vinkeles (1741–1816), *Four Regents of the Amsterdam Lepers' Asylum*, 1769, engraving after the painting of the same title by Ferdinand Bol (1616–1680), 1649. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Holl. III, no. 30.

fig. 65   Ferdinand Bol (1616–1680), *Three Regentesses of the Amsterdam Lepers' Asylum*, 1668, canvas, 170 × 208 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-C-367.

fig. 66   Ferdinand Bol (1616–1680), *Six Regents and the Beadle of the Amsterdam Nieuwe Zijds Institute for the Outdoor Relief of the Poor*, 1657, canvas, 143 × 192 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-C-436.

fig. 67   Nicolaes Maes (1634–1693), *Six Governors of the Amsterdam Surgeons' Guild*, 1680–1681, canvas, 130.5 × 195.5 cm. Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, inv. no. A 7541.

fig. 68   Frans Hals (1581/1585–1666), *Banquet of the Officers and Junior Officers of the Civic Guard of Saint George,* 1616, canvas, 175 × 324 cm. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum, inv. no. os I-109. Photo: Tom Haartsen.

fig. 69   Frans Hals (1581/1585–1666), *Banquet of the Officers of the Civic Guard of Saint Hadrian,* 1627, canvas, 183 × 266.5 cm. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum, inv. no. os I-111. Photo: Tom Haartsen.

fig. 70   Frans Hals (1581/1585–1666), *Banquet of the Officers of the Civic Guard of Saint George,* 1627, canvas, 179 × 257.5 cm. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum, inv. no. os I-110. Photo: A. Dingjan.

fig. 71   Frans Hals (1581/1585–1666), *Assembly of the Officers and Junior Officers of the Civic Guard of Saint Hadrian,* 1633, canvas, 207 × 337 cm. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum, inv. no. os I-112. Photo: Tom Haartsen.

fig. 72   Frans Hals (1581/1585–1666) and Pieter Codde (1599–1678), *The Company of Captain Reynier Reael and Lieutenant Cornelis Michielsz. Blaeuw,* known as *The Meager Company,* 1637, canvas, 209 × 429 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. SK-C-374.

fig. 73   Frans Hals (1581/1585–1666), *Officers and Junior Officers of the Civic Guard of Saint George,* 1639, canvas, 218 × 421 cm. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum, inv. no. os I-113. Photo: Tom Haartsen.

fig. 74   Frans Hals (1581/1585–1666), *Regents of the Saint Elisabeth Hospital,* ca. 1641, canvas, 153 × 252 cm. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum, inv. no. os I-114, on permanent loan from the Stichting Elisabeth van Thüringenfonds.

fig. 75   Frans Hals (1581/1585–1666), *Regents of the Old Men's Almshouse,*

1664, canvas, 172.5 × 256 cm. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum, inv. no. os I-115. Photo: Tom Haartsen.

fig. 76   Frans Hals (1581/1585–1666), *Regentesses of the Old Men's Almshouse,* 1664, canvas, 170.5 × 249.5 cm. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum, inv. no. os I-116. Photo: Tom Haartsen.

fig. 77   Hendrick Gerritsz. Pot (ca. 1585–1657), *Officers and Junior Officers of the Civic Guard of Saint Hadrian Leaving the Doelen,* 1630, canvas, 214 × 276 cm. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum, inv. no. os I-285. Photo: Tom Haartsen.

fig. 78   Jan de Bray (1627–1697), *Regents of the Lepers', Pestilence, and Insane Asylum,* 1667, canvas, 142 × 197.5 cm. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum, inv. no. os I-34. Photo: Tom Haartsen.
Note: Riegl gives the artist as Jacob van Loo and the date as 1658.

fig. 79   Jan de Bray (1627–1697), *Regents of the Orphanage of the Poor,* 1663, canvas, 187.5 × 249 cm. Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum, inv. no. os I-245. Photo: A. Dingjan.
Note: Riegl gives the date as 1667.

fig. 80   Rembrandt, school of, *Man, from Behind, Looking through a Half-Open Door,* brown pen and brown wash, 20.3 × 13.4 cm. Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, inv. 8830.

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Alois Riegl
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Translations by Evelyn M. Kain and David Britt

Wolfgang Kemp is professor of art history at the Universität Hamburg. He taught at the Philipps-Universität Marburg from 1983 to 1995 and at the Universität Gesamthochschule Kassel from 1974 to 1983. His publications include *The Narratives of Gothic Stained Glass* and *The Desire of My Eyes: The Life and Work of John Ruskin.*

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In *The Group Portraiture of Holland*,
Alois Riegl argues that group portrait
painters in Holland radically trans-
formed the beholder's relationship
to the work of art. Italian art based
on internal coherence – that is, a
clear hierarchy of the figures depicted
in the painting – ran counter to the
Kunstwollen (artistic volition) of the
artists of democratic Holland. Seek-
ing to maintain equality among the
sitters, these artists introduced exter-
nal coherence into their group por-
traits – that is, the figures portrayed
actively engage the viewer outside
the frame. Riegl's exploration of this
new role for the beholder, and of
the increasingly nuanced interplay of
internal and external coherence in
works by painters such as Rembrandt
and Frans Hals, broke new ground in
the theory of communication, in the
aesthetics of reception, and in histor-
ical psychology.

The Group Portraiture of Holland shows how artists such as Rembrandt and Frans Hals radically altered the relationship of the beholder to the work of art. Alois Riegl's masterly study has become a point of departure for a variety of twentieth-century readings of art, demonstrating again that, as Walter Benjamin wrote of Riegl's *Late Roman Art Industry,* "every great scholarly discovery . . . portends a revolution in method."