

## Dutch portrait & figure painters of the 17th century

Written by Administrator

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The real inaugurators of Dutch portraiture were **Mierevelt**, **Hals**, **Ravesteyn**, and **De Keyser**.

### **Mierevelt**

(1567-1641) was one of the earliest, a prolific painter, fond of the aristocratic sitter, and indulging in a great deal of elegance in his accessories of dress and the like. He had a slight, smooth brush, much detail, and a profusion of color.

Quite the reverse of him was **Frans Hals** (1584?-1666), one of the most remarkable painters of portraits with which history acquaints us. In giving the sense of life and personal physical presence, he was unexcelled by any one. What he saw he could portray with the most telling reality. In drawing and modelling he was usually good; in coloring he was excellent, though in his late work sombre; in brush-handling he was one of the great masters.

Strong, virile, yet easy and facile, he seemed to produce without effort. His brush was very broad in its sweep, very sure, very true. His best work was in portraiture, and the most important of this is to be seen at Haarlem, where he died after a rather careless life. As a painter, pure and simple, he is almost to be ranked beside Velasquez; as a poet, a thinker, a man of lofty imagination, his work gives us little enlightenment except in so far as it shows a fine feeling for masses of color and problems of light.

Though excellent portrait-painters, **Ravesteyn** (1572?-1657) and **De Keyser** (1596?-1679) do not provoke enthusiasm. They were quiet, conservative, dignified, painting civic guards and societies with a knowing brush and lively color, giving the truth of physiognomy, but not with that verve of the artist so conspicuous in

### **Hals**

, nor with that unity of the group so essential in the making of a picture.

The next man in chronological order is **Rembrandt** (1607?-1669), the greatest painter in Dutch art.

**Rembrandt's** influence upon Dutch art was far-reaching, and appeared immediately in the works of his many pupils. They all followed his methods of handling light-and-shade, but no one of them ever equalled him, though they produced work of much merit. **Bol**

(1611-1680) was chiefly a portrait-painter, with a pervading yellow tone and some pallor of flesh-coloring.

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### **Flinck**

(1615-1660) at one time followed

### **Rembrandt**

so closely that his work has passed for that of the master; but latterly he, too, came under Flemish influence.

Next to **Eeckhout** he was probably the nearest to **Rembrandt** in methods of all the pupils.

### **Eeckhout**

(1621-1674) was really a

### **Rembrandt**

imitator, but his hand was weak and his color hot.

### **Maes**

(1632-1693) was the most successful manager of light after the school formula, and succeeded very well with warmth and richness of color, especially with his reds. The other

### **Rembrandt**

pupils and followers were

### **Poorter**

(fl. 1635-1643),

### **Victoors**

(1620?-1672?),

### **Koninck**

(1619-1688),

### **Fabritius**

(1624-1654), and

### **Backer**

(1608?-1651).

**Van der Helst** (1612?-1670) stands apart from this school, and seems to have followed more the portrait style of **De Keyser**. He was a realistic, precise painter, with much excellence of modelling in head and hands, and with fine carriage and dignity in the figure.