

Patrick Bade | Frans Hals

- [Judi] Well, welcome, Patrick. Welcome everybody. It's just gone 5:00 PM in the UK. Over to you, Patrick.

- Thank you, Judi. Welcome to everybody from Paris. You can see I'm back in my flat here. And a very special welcome, a virtual hug to my dear friend Natasha Lang. Thank you for your kind message. And so we've got Frans Hals who seems a very suitable subject for the festive season, even if it's not going to be all that festive this year, unfortunately. He's someone that we feel that we know. In fact, we know remarkably little about him. We don't really even have an idea of what he looked like, which is very unusual for a prominent artist of the 17th century. Over the years various art historians have thought that they had identified self-portraits, but there's never really been any firm proof that any of his portraits are self-portraits.

*Images are displayed throughout the lecture.*

On the other hand, we do feel that we know his sitters and we feel these are the kind of people that we could meet at the pub. They're very down-to-earth people. They're people like us. Paintings like these, he paints a lot of people drinking and having a very good time so that's given him a kind of rollicking reputation. And early in the 20th century, a very busy researcher came across in police records evidence that Frans Hals had drunkenly beaten up his wife and everybody said, "Oh, well, what do you expect?" "Yes, that's what we expected from these paintings." But then it turned out that the Frans Hals who beat up his wife was another Frans Hals entirely, nothing to do with the painter Frans Hals. And in fact, I think if they looked at other paintings by Frans Hals they would've seen that he's a man who liked women.

And there are many, many portraits that show that he had a tremendous empathy, sympathy, whatever you want to call it, with the female sex. I mean, compare these. So these are two paintings by Frans Hals. These are human beings. He's relating to them as human beings. Often artists who, in inverted commas, "love women" like Peter Lely. I don't think he's relating to these two women as human beings. These are completely objectified. They're sex objects of the 17th century. Now, the other legend about Frans Hals which grew up in the middle of the 20th century, was that he was some kind of proto-lefty class warrior and that he hated and despised and mocked his wealthier patrons. This was an idea that was particularly promoted by the Marxist art critic John Berger, but it was refuted by other art historians.

And I can sort of see both sides of it. I'm going to present the case for and against and I leave it to you decide what you think. Here is perhaps his most famous painting known as "The Laughing Cavalier." I think he might be better described, really, as the smirking cavalier. He is a rather irritating character. He's obviously very, very pleased with himself, as is this rather louche character on the right-hand side. These two make a nice comparison also because you see earliest Frans Hals on the left and late Frans Hals on the right. And you can see a big stylistic difference, much bolder, freer paint in the right-hand side. But as various art historians have

pointed out, these paintings were expensive. It was very expensive to have your portrait painted in the 17th century.

Frans Hals would not have had a clientele, people would've not paid him large amount of sums of money if they had thought that he was taking the piss and that he was mocking them. Here are two more. What do you think of these? On the left-hand side is a man called Jasper Schade and researchers have found correspondence about him that he was a man who was notorious for spending enormous amounts of money on his clothes. And in his wonderfully dashing way, Frans Hals does give you an indication of just how lavishly embroidered Jasper Schade's clothes are. The painting on the right-hand side is in fact the only. I'll see if I can get his feet, if I can enlarge this image. Let me see if I can get it for. Oops, no, want to go back again. I want you to be able to see the full-length if it's possible, but I don't think I can.

Yes, I can. Yes, that's better. Now you see the full-length. This is his only life-size, standing, full-length portrait. It's in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich and it's another very wealthy man called Willem van Heythuyzen, and he does look quite obnoxious. I think the two of them look quite obnoxious. On the other hand, Willem van Heythuyzen was obviously well enough pleased with his portrait to commission another. This is the same man a few years later and certainly a much more likeable image of the man. Here you sense that there is some kind of, quite a warm relationship, quite an intimate friendship between the artist and the sitter.

The other paintings, which have been very much that here are details of the group portraits he did of the regents and the regentesses of the old people's home in Haarlem, which is now the Frans Hals Museum. And it was long believed that Frans Hals actually landed up there as an inmate in his life and some people put forward the idea that these portraits were Frans Hals's revenge on the wealthy people who put him in the old people's home. And certainly it is striking that the, it's the two servants, the man and the woman standing in the back are seen to be depicted more sympathetically, shall we say, than the wealthy who are quite sharply almost caricaturely depicted. But I will come back to that at the end. And apparently the latest evidence is that Frans Hals, although he was in poverty at the end of his life and needed help from the town of Haarlem, that in fact he wasn't an inmate of this old people's house.

So here is Haarlem, the city of Frans Hals. Frans Hals is his most famous, its most famous son. He was actually not born in Haarlem, he was born in Antwerp which became part of. He was born around 1580 and soon after that Antwerp was reconquered by the Spanish and it became part of the Catholic Spanish Netherlands so Protestants moved northwards, that's presumably why his family left Antwerp and went to Haarlem. This is a painting by Ruisdael, Jacob van Ruisdael. You can see Haarlem in the distance, the great gothic church of Saint Bavo that still dominates the city. And in the 17th century it was very prosperous, its wealth was based on linen, very much. You can see the fields outside the city where the linen is lying in the sun to be bleached. Silk and silk weaving was brought to the city by Huguenots refugees.

So a lot of the prosperity of Holland and particularly of Haarlem was because, very sensibly, the

Dutch and the citizens of Haarlem welcomed refugees. Frankly, quite apart from morality, it's always a good thing to welcome refugees because they work hard and they make money and they enrich the places that they go to. It's unfortunately a lesson that the world still has to learn. But the Dutch knew that in the 17th century. Other aspects of the city's wealth: beer brewing, it's very famous for its beer, and tulips. I've mentioned before that the great boom and bust in dealing in tulips in 1630s, and that was very much based in Haarlem as well.

Here is a map of the city of Haarlem in the 17th century. This picture by Berckheyde shows the Saint Bavo and the main square of Haarlem. And those of you, well, I think most of you are probably around my age so you probably remember that wonderful series of Kenneth Clark "Civilization." I think it was in the early 1970s on the BBC. It certainly had a tremendous impact on me and I can still remember the episode on 17th century Holland when Kenneth Clark, we had this picture on the screen, and then you saw Kenneth Clark actually walk into the square as though he's walking into the painting. And you could see that absolutely nothing has changed in that square since the 17th century. Now, this is a very curious picture by Frans Hals. And it's, the correspondence and the records that survive around this picture provide a little glimpse into his character. As I said, we know so little about him.

People have sifted through all the archives trying to find any trace of him and little odd bits of information have turned up. So this is a group portrait of a military company and I mentioned these military companies, of course, in connection with Rembrandt and "The Night Watch" that Holland was a country permanently under threat of invasion and destruction. And so the men formed these, kind of, home guard military companies in the event of an invasion. And Frans Hals painted several of these in Haarlem that you can now see in the Frans Hals Museum, and this one so-called "The Meagre Company" in Amsterdam. So he went in the early 1630s and he started off this painting and didn't finish it in one go, so he went back to Haarlem and didn't come back to Amsterdam. And so they pursued the matter and they said to him, "Look, you've got to come and finish this" and he refused to go back to Amsterdam. When you know that today Haarlem is, it's like a suburb of Amsterdam.

I mean it's 15 minutes by train. You could walk it in half a day if you wanted to from Haarlem to Amsterdam, but he wouldn't go back and he said, no, if you want me to finish this picture, all sitters will have to come to Haarlem and pose for me in Haarlem. And they wouldn't do that, so the picture is actually half by Frans Hals and half by a local Amsterdam artist called Pieter Codde who is very efficient. But it's a very interesting painting to stand in front of. Can't quite get it, I think, from the image on the screen, on a computer screen. But if you go and look at that in the Rijksmuseum Museum in Amsterdam, you can see, I think, that the figure on the extreme left is definitely by Frans Hals. Look at all, you can see that one, that very characteristic angular, brilliant brushwork on his clothing and the flag. And the painting of the figures towards the right, many of the other figures is much smoother and blander.

Now Frans Hals is the oldest major artist of the Golden Age of Dutch painting. He was born around 1580, so he's a whole generation older than Rembrandt, and two generations older than

Vermeer. So what did he look at? What did he learn from? Who did he study with? We don't know any of this but there wouldn't have been a lot of art around in Holland in the late 16th century and the first years of the 17th century I think that would've appealed to him very much. This is probably the best known Dutch artist of the generation before. I mean, he's an artist who actually lives well into the 17th century. He's called Wtewael and you can see he's, this is almost a caricature of a mannerist painting. It's meant to be a biblical subject.

It's the flood from the Old Testament. But I mean, it's a grotesque painting really, isn't it? You, this mannerist showing off your skill in complicated poses, these ridiculously overcomplicated poses throughout the picture. It's a kind of grotesquely pretentious picture. So this is around 1600 and this is one of the very earliest paintings that has survived from Frans Hals. This, but it's dated 1516, so he's already 36 and so what was he doing before that? Maybe the earlier paintings are, have survived or some of them have survived, but they're not signed and they're so different from anything we expect by from him that they just haven't been recognised as being by him. This is called "A Shrovetide Tuesday" and it shows sort of carnival celebrations. It's a rather earthy subject with all those phallic sausages in the foreground and the man on the right-hand side making a very obscene gesture with his hands that I'm not going to explain to you if you can't work it out for yourselves.

And so where did he come to this style with his half-length figures very close to the picture surface and this earthy realism? Well, as with early Rembrandt and later we shall see with early Vermeer, the important influence was from the Utrecht school painters, Terbrugghen, van Baburen is the one you see on the screen on the right-hand side, Honthorst. They were a group of Dutch artists from Utrecht who went to Rome in the first decade of the 17th century and they picked up the style of Caravaggio. And they were, although they're all quite lesser artists, they're not really major artists, but they're very important artists historically because they really stimulated, they triggered in a way, the Golden Age of Dutch painting.

Here's another later picture by Frans Hals, on the left-hand side. One of the, if you remember the early chiaro scenes of Caravaggio, half-length figures often against a light wall. This painting is in the National Gallery and it's very well hung on the wall. When you walk into that room it's, you feel that, he looks incredibly alive in front of you and you can see that he's reacting in two directions. You walk in and he's gesturing towards you but there's somebody else to his left and his eyes swivel towards that person and you can see his mouth open in mid-conversation. On the right-hand side, also in the National Gallery, actually, this is Terbrugghen, a Utrecht artist.

A little bit more slickly painted but you can see that this is the, basically the same kind of idea. Two more paintings in the National Gallery, a Renaissance portrait, Giovanni Bellini on the left-hand side of Doge Loredan. That dates from 1501. And this wonderful portrait by Frans Hals which is dated 1633. We don't know who the sitter is 'cause the name is not on, but the inscription on the right-hand side, I hope you can see it. It just says aetatis suae, his age, 34, anno, the year, at 1633. So we know that this is a man age 34 and he was born in 1599. Now the Renaissance portrait, of course, is very stiff, very formal. Doge Loredan looks out of the

picture but he certainly doesn't engage in any way with the viewer.

He's looking right past you and he's very sharply separated from you by this illusionistic ledge in the foreground. Now, I used to love taking my students to the National Gallery and standing them in front of this picture, and I'd say to them, you can see he's just, he's sat down, he's in a slightly, he's off-center. He's leaning to the left and he's slightly off-balance. Now he is, is he, has he just arrived or is he about to go out? And usually people get the right answer. He's just arrived. And the clues up, first of all you can see his rather flushed face. He maybe he's harried here. And the other clue is that he's just taken his hat off, and I think you can see it here, you can see the mark left on his forehead by his hat.

So the difference between a Renaissance portrait, which is so formal, and a Baroque portrait which is very informal, very chatty, friendly, spontaneous. Here's a better picture of the whole thing and look at that wonderful ruff. This is towards, this around about this time, 1633, you can see there anno 1633. That's about the end period for ruffs. It's just about this time that they're replaced by lace collars. So Frans Hals loves this kind of informality and this is one of his absolute favourite poses where somebody is swivelling around. You've just walked into the room and you're addressing this person and this gentleman swivels round to engage with you. And it's, and here again you can see this man is engaging, in a way, with two people at once.

He's turned round towards you but there is somebody to your left that he's also, who's speaking to him. You can see his mouth is open, he's just about to speak or is in mid-conversation. This man's called Isaac Massa. And so it's a format that, as you can see, he uses again and again. This man we know is a member of the Coymans family, a very wealthy Dutch patrician family 'cause here we have the, we have how old he is and the date, and we also have a coat of arms with three cows on it. Coy is Dutch for cow and so cows were part of the family crest of this family. And here, this one, again, you've seen this before. This is Willem van Heythuyzen. I think this is a tiny picture, actually, it's one of the smaller portraits of Frans Hals as opposed to the, he also did the biggest one of his career of the same man.

And I think it's a wonderful picture but it always alarms me what he's doing to that chair. I know there are quite a few of my ex-students listening and they will probably remember the sessions that we used to do at Christie's about how to treat objects, how to handle objects, how to lift things, things that you should never do. And an absolute no-no, of course, is to ever sit on a chair and tilt it like this. This is exactly how you destroy a chair. So, but so he's, he has his formulae for poses and positions but he's very adventurous. I mean, this one is a very unusual pose. I really can't think of any other 17th century artist with a man like this with his arms folded across his chest. You have to wait a long time, really into the 19th century before this kind of pose becomes common. And hands, of course, he's, the faces are very expressive but also the hands are tremendously expressive in Frans Hals paintings.

Again you have the sense of being engaged in a very animated conversation. Sometimes the hands will even pop out of the picture space into your space. And here are some details of

hands. The one on the top left, that's from that boy with the skull I showed you earlier. I'm always amazed when I stand in front of that picture the incredible skill with which that. It's so difficult. I can hardly think of a more difficult subject to draw than a foreshortened hand coming out towards you like that, to make it convincing and to do it with the kind of ease that Frans Hals does it is amazing. These two, I'm going to show you the full pictures later. So touching, this is a man and a newly married couple and the wife is Isabella Coymans, is reaching to, she's handing a rose to her husband and he's reaching towards her to pick it up. Mouths.

Now, I think I may have mentioned before, Bernini said. Bernini, who I'll be coming to after Christmas, he said if you want to make a good portrait of anybody, you have to engage them in conversation and you have to make it look like they have just spoken or about to speak. So we've got a whole lot of Baroque mouths here. Rembrandt top left, two Frans Hals underneath, van der Helst bottom left, Velasquez that evil mouth of Pope Innocent X in the middle, Bernini at the top, Rembrandt, Frans Hals, and again Rembrandt bottom right. See what the, how amazingly expressive these mouths are. And here are some mouths by Frans Hals, this rather tight lip superior mouth of Jasper Schade at the top.

Now brushwork, this is something, it's very hard to really talk about this via Zoom or a computer. I've done my best searching around the internet in some cases taking my own slides to get details to convey to you brushwork, which is one of the most amazing features of Frans Hals painting. This is a detail from "The Laughing Cavalier." So it's early in his career, it's 1620s, and his technique at this point is relatively tight compared with how he would paint later on. But already you can see the characteristic rhythms of his brush work. And I always have a fantasy of him with the brush held out like a rapier. And you can see the strokes, they're very, they don't curve. They're quite angular, slashing strokes and I see him like a nimble swordsman slashing at the canvas with his brush.

Now look at that wonderful orange patch just above the lace in the middle, lower middle part of the picture. Here this is Mr. Coymans again. This is considerably later, you can see it's 1649 so it's more than 20 years later. That's a bit of a grainy image but maybe you can see, particularly I think in the area of the white linen of the cuff. Very characteristic these angular slashing strokes. Paint is thin, you don't find a buildup, an impasto of dense paint with Frans Hals in the way that you do with late Rembrandt. This is a rapid technique, you know, considering he lived to be in his 80s I'm surprised we don't have more pictures by him 'cause I always have the impression that these pictures were done very, very quickly indeed.

When you stand in front of this picture, in reality, you can actually see the underpainting in the middle areas of tone, and over the top he's done these slashing strokes in greyish black and white. And how about this. This is one of his most famous paintings, Malle Babbe. Talk a little bit more about her later but, God, the confidence of this. For me the most amazing detail of this detail is actually the highlight on her cheekbone on the left, and so deft, I mean that's been, he's done that in a matter of seconds. It's chunk, chunk, two little strokes, slashing strokes with his brush to create that highlight and it's exactly right and it really gives you the sense of the shape

of her cheekbone, and the light dancing off it.

And here is the skull from the young boy that I showed you earlier. And again, you can see he doesn't, he models it very, very rapidly with these hatching, slashed brushstrokes. And this is a very late painting right from the end of his life. And just trying to see if I know, put written down the name of this man 'cause it is known who this guy is. No, I haven't. But anyway, this guy is, he's wearing the kind of wig, this was fashion for this kind of heavy Baroque wig came in from France in the second half of the 17th century, and he's wearing a kimono very impressionistically described with rapid brushwork by Frans Hals.

Kimonos were huge status symbols. You probably know that the only nation in Europe that were privileged to trade with the Japanese in the second half of the century were the Dutch. And they had a little colony of merchants at Nagasaki and every year the Dutch would present gifts to the Shogun and in return they received 30 kimonos and these were fabulously, highly priced and extremely valuable so this man is really showing off wearing his kimono. And you see how incredibly loose and bold his brushwork, Frans Hals brushwork is towards the end. Now portrait. Frans Hals portraits interact with the viewer but sometimes they interact with one another. Now these two paintings belong to the Wallace Collection.

Until a year or so ago they hung opposite of each other in the Grand Gallery of the Wallace Collection. They'd been like that, well, since I'd known them, since the 1960s, probably since the gallery was first arranged in the 1890s. And I always thought that the person, actually the hanging of the Wallace Collection till quite recently was full of very naughty jokes. And I find it rather sad that all that has been undone with rather more politically correct hanging of the pictures. I mean the, for instance Louis XV portrait was hung so that he was eyeing his mistress, Madame de Pompadour, across the room. There were all sorts of little things like that. And I think that the person who put these two pictures opposite was having a little joke because you look at the smirking cavalier and he is so obviously the office sex pest and he's looking lustfully.

Full of himself, of course he's thinks he's irresistible and he's looking across the gallery at Velasquez' rather prim young lady and I don't think she's very impressed. And her gesture of pulling her veil across her décolletage I think is, seems to be a reaction to his smirking expression. A rather more loving and charming interaction this is, of course, deliberate that the one before is obviously accidental. This is Stephan Geraedts and his new wife Isabella Coymans and such a wonderful, loving pair. It's very sad that they're divorced now because I think she's in Antwerp and he's in America, so they only get together when there's a big Frans Hals retrospective exhibition. But so you've got this loving gesture of handing the flower from one painting to the other and look at the way that they lovingly meet each other's gaze. So I think Frans Hals is, he was married, of course, and he had lots of children and I think he understood marital relations very well.

You've got a fairly newly married couple on the left-hand side, and she's leaning lovingly on her husband's shoulder. And there's a wonderful kind of counterpoint in their gestures and their

body language of their loving relationship. The couple on the right-hand side, I think that marriage is, has been going for much longer. I think they probably still love each other. Yeah, I think they still love each other, but there's a slightly more wary and prickly relationship between the two. Here is the young couple, Isaac Massa and his wife, and the paintings also full of symbolism of their love. There's an ivy and there's honeysuckle so the idea of ivy and honeysuckle clinging to one another is symbolic of their loving relationship. As I said, he had lots of children so he knew what family life was like.

So we have this couple we've just looked at, quite a mature couple and their children reaching adolescence. Quite, the young boy smiles in a friendly way towards us but they're quite well-behaved young children. You've got this very sad black servant in the middle. I'm going to come back to him later. Talk a little bit more about him. This is a family. This is, you've got some slightly more rumbustious, slightly more undisciplined children here. This is actually now only a fragment. I'll show you that this. They must, they had at least 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10 children this couple because the other children were on the other side of the painting and at some point the painting was cut in two. But in fact, this painting, the little girl seated in the corner was not born when this painting was first painted by Frans Hals.

And I, he may have died or whatever but they, when the little girl came along and they wanted her to be included, they went to Jan de Bray to add her into the picture. Oh, here is the other side of the same picture. Oh my goodness, no, it's even more children. God, terrifying number of children that this family had. But again, you can see that they're very jolly, very relaxed, and they really behave like children, children that we recognise, like modern children. They're not little shrunken aristocrats like the Balbi family painted by van Dyck that you see on the left-hand side. Yeah, these are real children that you could meet anywhere, any day. And this is an adorable picture.

This is quite an early painting by Frans Hals so again, in his somewhat tighter style, and it's of a very wealthy young girl who is called Catarina Hooft with her nurse. And that's very interesting. There's been quite a lot of discussion of this. Why would a very wealthy family have, you know, have their daughter painted in this incredibly lavish costume and not have her with her mother? To paint her with the nurse. The nurse is also painted in an extremely dignified and sympathetic and respectful way and it's a wonderful image, really, of a loving relationship between a little girl and her nursemaid. And despite her formal costume, she's a real little girl too. And again, these scholars who are beavering away in the archives. She lived to a great old age and obviously she liked her rich clothing because when she died, in her will she left no less than three kimonos. And this is a small, delightful.

Well this is just a joyous celebration of early childhood. You can see that rather like Rembrandt with his drawings of his children, that maybe this was one of Frans Hals children. We can't know. It would seem quite possible. This is, I don't think this is a painting, to me, that looks like it was a commission from a wealthy buyer. This looks to me like a painting that was done very spontaneously and for the pleasure of doing it and for the pleasure of celebrating childhood. The



other thing that's very interesting with Frans Hals, as well as several other 17th century portrait painters are his pictures of outsiders. So there are a number, quite a number of the most greatest portraits of the 17th century.

Rembrandt's portraits of Jews who we've already looked at. Velasquez also did portraits of actors and dwarfs and so on. These were people who were not commissioning their own portraits. The artist chose to paint them. And you know, there you could debate that, why? Why do you think that? I mean, I don't really have any answers for that. You can think about that for yourself, why the artist wanted to paint these pictures. And this is a woman called Malle Babbe and again, researchers have found that she existed and she was obviously quite wild, and she landed up, she ended her life in a house of correction perhaps for her drunkenness. And just look at the panache with which this is painted, again the highlights on the pewter jug and this dashing brushwork of her ruff and her headdress.

For a long, long time she was thought to be a witch because of the owl standing on her, they thought the owl was a witches familiar but apparently that's not true at all. And like, as we shall see when we get to Dutch Yarrow? Painting, proverbs are very popular. Proverbs are very important in Dutch painting and one of the sayings in Holland is to be as drunk as an owl. So the owl is actually reference not to her being a witch but to her drunkenness. And this guy, Peeckelhaering, there are two portraits of him. He was a comic actor. And again, this is a portrait that Frans Hals has painted for the pleasure of it. It won't have been a commissioned portrait, although perhaps he would've found a client to buy it from him.

And just for comparison, I remind you again of Ribera, the Spanish artist living in Naples who also did paintings of outsiders, drunken people, social riff-raff and so on. And while on the subject of outsiders, how about this little boy? I think recently with people trying to become more aware of the role of people of colour and how they were treated. I mean, who is this boy? And he looks very sad and very introverted. Perhaps he was a slave, he was certainly a servant if not a slave and, but I think Frans Hals treats him with dignity. And for comparison here are two black servants painted by Hogarth the 18th century in a really horrible, kind of, disrespectful, I would say, caricatural way. And I'm going to finish by briefly talking about the group portraits and the place to see these, of course, is in the Frans Hals Museum.

And there are two great group portraits of the company of St. Adrian's Guard. Oh, these are "The Officers of the St Adrian Company." Now Holland was not a democracy or an egalitarian society in the way we would understand it today, but it was much more so than any other country in the 17th century. It was, I suppose, run more or less by patriciate, you know, wealthy merchants and so on but it was much, much more open, much more tolerant. And so the group portrait seems to, is a particular feature of Dutch painting in the 17th century which is an expression of this, the kind of society at the time in Holland.

And group portraits are really difficult. We've had this discussion already with Velasquez and with Rembrandt, and there were all these legends about how Rembrandt got into trouble with

"The Night Watch" because some people were in the shadow and some people were not as prominently figured in the composition. So the artist has to, you know, everybody is paying their wack towards this and everybody wants to be prominent and so that is a tremendous, tremendous challenge. And I think Frans Hals comes up, he solves it absolutely brilliantly. I mean, this is like a complex fugue by Bach. There's so much going on here it's like a rather riotous party that they're having. And to give everybody due prominence and to make it a lively, an interesting and unified composition at the same time, this is a really fantastic achievement. And this is a pretty good reproduction as far as one can get on the internet. But these paintings, they really repay standing in front of examining closely.

You can see the joy, the pleasure he's had in painting the flags and the sashes and the rich clothing of these people, always with this wonderful, free, dashing brushwork. And here is the pendant to that also in the museum. And you see the how sympathetically he responds to all the individuals and giving you tremendously vivid and convincing portraits. Ooh, that's a rather terrible reproduction. Oh, that's better. Yes, here are the regents of the old people's home. So what do you think about this? Is he criticising them? Is he mocking them? Here is the Frans Hals Museum. This is the, it survives from the 17th century building where the poor elderly people were kept in humane conditions. What about this man's face?

Been a lot of discussion about him. There you see this. Oops, no, the third one from the right. Is he drunk? Is Frans Hals making fun of him? Various doctors have come up. I know we've got lots of doctors listening in. Maybe somebody has a diagnosis for what was wrong with this man. And here these rather mean-looking, uptight, four female regentesses. And it is quite striking, I think, that it's the only the maid in the background who really comes across as being very sympathetically characterised. Right, so I'm going to come out of my share and I'm going to see if. I can't see anything in chat for the. Oh, Q & A. Is that what I have to go into?

Q&A and Comments:

Q: "Why does he paint such rosy cheeks?"

A: He doesn't always but I suppose Dutch people do have rosy cheeks. And of course it's something that you would've been, if you think of the poetry of the people of the period, of Shakespeare or 17th century poetry, it was thought to be attractive to have rosy cheeks so it's something he would certainly want to emphasise.

Q: Oh the, yeah, "The guide remarked on 26 shades of black."

A: Yes, that is true. Renoir used to say "Black is the queen of colours." And yeah, black clothing was very much in fashion at the time. It was actually very expensive. And you know, black dyes which tended to rot the clothing as well, were certainly for the wealthiest people. So I suppose it's quite a challenge to paint people wearing black and so, how, Rembrandt could do it as well but Frans Hals is the great master of really making black effective and making it sing.

Q: "The significance of the skull head?"

A: It's a vanitas and the, you know, the 17th century, you've got a short life expectancy, you could die any minute from the plague, from all sorts of illnesses, from women in pregnancy and so on. People were very, very aware of death and that death could come at any time so the skull is a memento mori, it's a reminder of death. It's a vanitas symbol, you have to behave well because death is inevitable and eternity is a long time. Yes. I mean the, he said. If you go to the National Portrait Gallery in London and you see the room with all the group portraits of the First World War, how boring they are in their khaki and they're boring pictures anyway. Even Sargent is boring painting groups of army officers from the First World War. So certainly they're much more attractive, I would say, than anything since.

Q: "Kimono clad man. Is technique?"

A: Yes, I think it's all done very, very quickly and I think there's a fair amount of wet in wet. Let me see.

"I love seeing the engagement between artists and the subjects. Is this?" No, I mean I think Frans Hals takes it to a greater degree than most others, but it's not. I'd say it's characteristic of the Baroque period to have that very in scent of conversation. Rubens does it, Rembrandt does it Sometimes.

"More men than women." Oh, there's someone where I missed something here. "The form of dress in France. Lace is frequent in both." Yes, lace and embroidery, certainly a status symbol and there were all sorts of, you know, there were, you could get into trouble for wearing the wrong kind of clothing or too elaborate clothing that you're not supposed to have. It was, the fashions changed.

You know, Frans Hals is a very long-lived artist so fashions changed, you know, quite considerably between the 1620s and the 1660s. Yes, the brushwork is really, really fantastic. There's not much.

Q: Somebody says, "What is impasto painting?"

A: Impasto is thick, that's all it means. When you create. Rembrandt, late Rembrandt, you have incredible impasto. Whoops, that's my alarm going off. Rembrandt, you know, "The Jewish Bride" and that would be the perfect example of impasto on the sleeve. Great thick lumps of paint. "Which of his." I know that there is record of at least one of his sons becoming an artist but I'm not sure if there's anything that's been attributed to him. "Although many artists credit Frans Hals as a precursor to Impressionism, isn't it true that his brushwork was not." Well, I dunno, I think it's pretty spontaneous. I think it's pretty spontaneous. The Impressionists certainly, you know, looked at him as did, of course, Sargent looked at him so did Monet very

much.

Q: "Why would an artist paint a husband looking lovingly, but on different canvases?"

A: That's an interesting question. Actually, I think that one I showed you is the, I think it's the only one where there are pendant portraits that's by Frans Hals. But it was very, very common at the time with other artists. The, van Dyck does lots of pendant portraits. It's quite common to paint separate portraits of a husband and a wife. What I think is really unusual about the Frans Hals is that particular gesture connecting the two portraits. "Drunken woman." She's called Malle Babbe which means Mad Barbara.

Q: "Did he do any genre painting?"

A: Yes, the one I showed you, but not many and they're only at the very beginning of his career. The "Shrovetide" picture I showed you, it's a genre painting.

After a while he concentrates completely on portraits. Maybe. Somebody says, 'Maybe the rosy cheeks in some instances, since they were partial to alcohol.' Yeah, sounds quite convincing to me. "Many more men than women is that?" Well men were paying for these pictures, it would've been unusual for a woman to have the independent means to pay for a picture.

But he does paint a lot of women and he paints them wonderfully, as I said, I think he's a very, very sympathetic observer of women. "Did they go to war in those fancy clothes?" Hmm, I'm not sure. No, probably not. I think that's, those were for private celebrations.

But Isaac Massa, I didn't know all that about. He was a merchant who had connections with Russia, with the Baltic. I think he imported wood. And I don't know that much more about him. "How did he get his models to hold the poses and smiles?" I wish I knew. I mean I'm totally incapable. I do lots of portraits and I make sure that people have, I never even attempt anything like those.

I just dunno how he does it. It's, to me it's magic that those spontaneous poses. He must have. I don't think they held them. You couldn't. I think he was just brilliant at rapid observation. "I think the man with the rather sick face is exactly that. I don't think he's being mocked." Yeah, well a lot of people would agree with you, but as I said there's been quite a lot of discussion around that. "Was self-portrait?"

Yes, self-portrait was very common in Hals time and what's interesting, people were collecting self-portraits. There was a very famous. The Duke of Tuscany, of course, had the biggest and most famous collection of self-portraits and Rembrandt made a self-portrait for his collection. So yeah, self-portrait, it is odd really that Frans Hals apparently didn't make self-portraits, or at least that none have come down to us.

And why didn't his contemporaries paint him? Why not? They, you know, he was obviously quite well-respected in Haarlem. It's a mystery and I can't give you an answer to that. "No landscapes?" No there are landscapes in the background of some of the pictures. There's that Isaac Massa somebody was asking about him.

In the background of his portrait there's a sort of what looks like a Russian forest landscape in the background. 'Re: More men than women. Would that relate to the type of society?" Yeah, yes it would. It would. "I really like the facial expressions." No, no, no. He's, as I said, he's, these are people that we feel that we could know and that we would like, and the children, of course, you're so right, he's such a fabulous painter of women.

"Noticing his loving connection with his subjects, did he come from a loving family?" We don't know. We have absolutely no information at all about his upbringing and his early life. No, I don't think there are any sketchbooks or surviving drawings by him. I think he was probably an artist who didn't need to make preparatory drawings. I think he worked directly from life. Have I answered all the questions?

Q: Patrick, somebody was asking about the piece behind you. "What is the interesting piece behind Patrick's right ear?"

A: You mean the silver piece on the wall? Is that what you mean? It's actually a relief from, it's that's copied from the big relief on the front of the Folies Bergere in Paris and it's by an artist called Picaud. And you can, that I think is actually a modern cast made possibly from an original mould, and you can get them in Paris. If anybody really wants them I could, there's a dealer at the, Marcel who usually has one for sale. But they're expensive, it will cost you about 700 euros to buy one. So is, it "Was Frans Hals?" Yes, he was married and he had children and we don't know where he trained. We have no idea who his teacher was.

- [Judi] Patrick, did you mention the name of the woman that had the owl on her shoulder?

- Malle Babbe. M-A-L-L-E B-A-B-B-E. Which just means Mad Barbara. Babbe is for Barbara.

- [Judi] Thank you Patrick. Just having a look, I don't think there are any more questions Patrick, so thank you very much.

- Thank you very much. Have as good a time as you possibly can and I hope things will all be, already be improving by when I next speak to you, which will be the beginning of January.

- [Judi] Thank you Patrick. And we've got, we'll see everybody for "Truly Golden" in about an hour. Thank you very much.

- Right, thank you.

- Thank you, everybody.

- Right, thanks. Bye-bye.

- Bye.