



Frans Hals: The Male Portrait

22 September 2021 - 30 January 2022

#TheMalePortrait

Frans Hals (c.1582/3–1666) is one of the greatest masters of the Dutch Golden Age, praised by his contemporaries for his capacity to paint lifelike portraits that seem ‘*to live and breathe*’.

In autumn 2021, The Wallace Collection will celebrate Hals’s most famous and beloved, yet still enigmatic, painting *The Laughing Cavalier* (1624).

The historic purchase of *The Laughing Cavalier* in 1865 by the 4th Marquess of Hertford (1800– 1870), the Wallace Collection’s principal founder, was instrumental in the revival of Frans Hals during the 19th century. Prior to this, Hals had been lost to obscurity. At a sale in Paris, Lord Hertford sensationally outbid Baron James de Rothschild (1792–1868) paying the astronomical sum of 51,000 francs for the picture (more than six times the estimate). The publicity around the sale led to the immediate fame of the painting and of Hals, causing prices of his works to soar.

This iconic image has never been seen together with other works by the artist and will form the centrepiece of *Frans Hals: The Male Portrait* - the first ever show to focus solely on Hals’s portraits of men posing on their own – placing *The Laughing Cavalier* within the broader context of Hals’s depictions of male sitters.

The exhibition will bring together over a dozen of the artist’s best male portraits from collections across the UK, Europe, and North America, making this the first major international loan exhibition at the Wallace Collection.

The show aims to demonstrate how across more than 50 years of Hals’s career, through pose and virtuosic painterly technique, he completely revolutionised the male portrait. From the finely painted early works, to the restricted palette of later years with the bolder, broader, and more fluid brushwork that inspired the Impressionists, Hals created something entirely new and fresh. He infused his works with a vitality and animated presence that was at the time, entirely new to portraiture.

Exhibition Curator, Dr Lelia Packer adds, *“This exhibition gives us an opportunity to marvel at Hals’s technical virtuosity and explore the notion of manhood in 17th-century Holland, and the ‘male gaze’ when it is turned on men. As well as addressing notions of gender and masculinity, the exhibition also focuses on individuals and their self-presentation. We have assembled a fantastic group of proud and determined figures, each of whom vie for our attention and communicate their stories through their very deliberate portrayals.”*

Exhibits date from the beginning of Hals’s career in the 1610s right up to the end of his life in 1666. The earliest work from the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham (*Portrait of a Man*, 1610-14), is sombre in mood. In contrast, the latest in date, from the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (*Portrait of a Man*, 1660-6), is almost like a painting by the 19th-century artist Édouard Manet, so loose and experimental is his technique. Each portrait, visitors will discover, carries its own striking individuality, communicating its sitter’s identity through pose, gaze, and costume.

While *The Laughing Cavalier* has been described as the most handsome man in art history, featuring in countless advertisements and even the London taxi ‘knowledge’ test, plus books and plays, we know very little about him. We do not know for certain who he was, and until now the painting has never been technically analysed.

A highlight of the exhibition will be the opportunity to study *The Laughing Cavalier* side by side with *Portrait of Tieleman Roosterman* (1634, Cleveland Museum of Art) for the very first time. It has been proposed that the wealthy Haarlem textile merchant was the same figure as the ‘Cavalier’. His luxurious and beautifully embroidered costume – a hallmark of many of these portraits - is certainly fitting for a man of his profession. So, could Tieleman Roosterman be *The Laughing Cavalier*? Visitors will soon be able to make up their own minds.

Director of the Wallace Collection, Dr Xavier Brays, says *“This exhibition - the Wallace’s first major international Old Master exhibition - is a momentous event in our ambitious new programme and is directly connected with the Collection’s new ability to lend artworks to our colleagues at home and internationally. It felt only fitting that we should honour our most beloved and enigmatic portrait with this unprecedented study of his unique cultural and art-historical influence, as well as to reunite him with his ‘friends’ from the collections of our wide ranging and eternally generous lenders.”*

The exhibition is supported by The Weston Culture Fund

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The catalogue is supported by The Elizabeth Cayzer Charitable Trust

The Collection will be collaborating with men’s health charity, Movember, for this exhibition on special events and initiatives.



NOTES FOR EDITORS

EXHIBITS LIST

- *Portrait of a Man*, 1610-14, Barber Institute of Fine Arts
- *The Laughing Cavalier*, 1624, The Wallace Collection
- *Isaac Abrahamsz Massa*, 1626, Art Gallery of Ontario
- *Pieter van den Broecke*, 1633, Kenwood House
- *Portrait of a Man*, c. 1635, Rijksmuseum
- *Portrait of a Man, possibly Nicolaes Pietersz Duyst van Voorhout*, c. 1636-38, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
- *Portrait of a Man*, 1630, Royal Collection
- *Portrait of Tieleman Roosterman*, 1634, Cleveland Museum of Art
- *Portrait of François Wouters*, about 1643-45, National Galleries of Scotland
- *Portrait of a Man*, early 1650s, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
- *Willem Coymans*, 1645, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC
- *Jasper Schade*, c. 1645, National Gallery Prague
- *Portrait of a Man*, 1660-6, The Fitzwilliam Museum

[IMAGES – HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES FOR MEDIA USE CAN BE DOWNLOADED HERE](#)

Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Man, Possibly Nicolaes Pietersz Duyst van Voorhout*, c. 1636-8, © The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Frans Hals, *The Laughing Cavalier*, 1624, © Trustees of the Wallace Collection, London

Frans Hals, *Portrait of Tieleman Roosterman*, 1634, The Cleveland Museum of Art

Tickets

Tickets are £14 and will be available to [book online from 30 July 2021](#). Tickets may be purchased on site on the day of your visit providing the exhibition and Collection has not reached its maximum visitor capacity.

Wallace Collection Members enjoy unlimited entry.

Each ticket includes a complimentary multimedia guide which brings the individual portraits to life through rich commentary provided by a multitude of individuals, adding additional layers of meaning to the paintings.

Catalogue

The exhibition catalogue, *Frans Hals: The Male Portrait*, by Dr Lelia Packer and Dr Ashok Roy, is available to pre-order now. [Visit the museum's online shop to purchase.](#)

Public programme

A vibrant programme of talks, courses and other events will enable audiences to engage with the exhibition and explore themes including identity, gender and the artist's legacy.

Opening Hours

The Wallace Collection is open daily, 10.00-17.00

About Frans Hals

Born in Antwerp in 1582/3, Frans Hals's family moved to Haarlem around 1586, where he remained for the rest of his life. By the turn of the 17th-century, due to many professionals moving north to avoid religious persecution (an exodus that included numerous artists) Haarlem became a prominent cosmopolitan capital and vibrant artistic centre. Hals worked mainly as a portraitist, but during the 1620s and early 1630s he also painted genre scenes. Hals's patrons were predominantly from Haarlem's elite, and included the city's militia companies, burgomasters, patricians, and wealthy citizens, such as brewers and merchants employed in the successful beer and cloth industries

that constituted the city's main areas of commercial production. Hals's unique ability to represent his sitters in a fleeting moment gained him an enthusiastic clientele and a distinctive niche within Haarlem's portrait market, which he dominated for several decades, until his death in 1666.

About the Wallace Collection

As one of Britain's preeminent cultural institutions, the Wallace Collection is home to one of the most significant ensembles of fine and decorative arts in the world. Highlights include oil paintings from the fourteenth to the late nineteenth centuries by artists such as Titian, Velazquez, Rubens and Van Dyck; princely arms and armour; and one of the finest collections of eighteenth-century French paintings and decorative arts. Visitors can also enjoy superb medieval and Renaissance objects, including Limoges enamel, maiolica, glass and bronzes. Displayed at Hertford House, former home to Sir Richard and Lady Wallace, this outstanding collection is displayed in a manner designed to evoke the lives and tastes of its founders, creating a special ambiance that remains an essential part of its charm.

www.wallacecollection.org

Instagram: @wallacemuseum

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Twitter: @WallaceMuseum

YouTube: TheWallacecollection

About Movember

Movember is the leading charity changing the face of men's health on a global scale, focusing on mental health and suicide prevention, prostate cancer and testicular cancer. The charity raises funds to deliver innovative, breakthrough research and support programmes that enable men to live happier, healthier and longer lives. Committed to disrupting the status quo, millions have joined the movement, helping fund over 1,250 projects around the world. In addition to tackling key health issues faced by men, Movember is working to encourage men to stay healthy in all areas of their life, with a focus on men staying socially connected and becoming more open to discussing their health and significant moments in their lives. The charity's vision is to have an everlasting impact on the face of men's health. To donate or learn more, please visit Movember.com.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, INTERVIEWS AND IMAGES

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