

Simon Kick (1603-1652)

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Catalogue Raisonné

By

Jochai Rosen

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INTRODUCTION

On September 5, 1631, the painter Simon Kick married in Amsterdam a young woman by the name of Christina (Stijntge) Duyster (1606-1680). She was the sister of the Amsterdam painter Willem Duyster (1599-1635), who on the same occasion married his colleague's sister, Margaretha Kick (1601-1653), in an unusual double wedding.¹ After the marriage, both couples lived together in *De Duystere Werelt* (The Darkened World). This was a house on the Koningstraat in Amsterdam, which was bought in 1620 by Willem Duyster's father, after which he selected his family name.

As a matter of fact, up until his wedding and in the years immediately after, Simon Kick was not yet a practicing painter. On the other hand, Willem Duyster was one of the leading painters in the city, an innovator who alongside painters such as Thomas de Keyser and Pieter Codde led to the rise of a new type of genre as well as portrait painting. It is quite clear that through Duyster, Simon Kick was introduced to the thriving art scene of Amsterdam, which included other youngsters such as Pieter Quast (1606-1647) and Pieter Potter (1597-1652). These painters developed a new visual formula known as the Guardroom Scene, which met with great success and was then adopted by other painters outside Amsterdam.² Simon Kick followed in the footsteps of these painters: He made the guardroom scene a central part of his output, and while absorbing other influences, developed a unique and easily recognizable style of his own. He is one of only ten 17th-century Dutch painters who regularly produced Guardroom Scenes, and one of only four to do so after 1640!

His late entry to the world of painting and his early death means that his oeuvre is rather small, but its study is crucial since—like so many other characteristic Dutch painters—it constitutes an important piece of the greater puzzle of 17th-century Dutch art. There is a constant trend that pushes scholars and the public alike to dwell on the art of Rembrandt and Vermeer; however, if one wishes to understand the art of the Dutch Golden Age, one must study a painter such as Simon Kick and others like him rather than phenomenal painters like Rembrandt and Vermeer. C. H. Collins-Baker (1880-1959), who for many years served as the keeper of the National Gallery in London and authored numerous publications in art history, addressed this dichotomy when discussing the painters of Kick's generation: “Too often, in singling out Rembrandt as the great alchemist, at whose touch Dutch art was changed, we are apt to overlook these pioneers. Rembrandt's influence and example were far reaching, but the growth of Terborch and De Hooch from the soldier-genre of Duck and Kick (perhaps their names have been against them) is direct, whereas the influence of Rembrandt was, so to speak, grafted on to the original stock.”³ Therefore, the purpose of this book is to present a complete overview of the life and art of Simon Kick, accompanied by a critical catalogue raisonné.

Simon Kick began painting around 1635 when he was 32 years old, and he was an active painter for only 17 years, until his early death in 1652. Therefore there is no point in discussing his paintings chronologically, and thus the chapters in this book as well as the catalogue are arranged thematically. Most of his paintings can be grouped under coherent visual formulae, and the chapters are divided accordingly into sub-chapters that follow an iconographic evolution. The few unusual paintings he made will therefore be discussed within the catalogue that will follow the text. Chapter 1 will present a short biography of Simon Kick and trace the life of his immediate family through

¹ Bode and Bredius 1889, p. 104; Wurzbach 1906-1910, vol. 1, p. 276 and Davidson 1973, p. 50.

² See Rosen 2010A.

³ Collins-Baker 1926, p. 21. Gerard ter Borch (1617-1681) and Pieter de Hooch (1629-1684) are two of the most highly praised 17th-century Dutch genre painters. Both specialized in depicting bourgeois interiors focusing on the figure of the middle-class woman. Jacob Duck (c.1600-1667) is a genre painter who specialized in brothel and guardroom scenes. The influence of painters such as Codde, Duyster and Duck on the development of ter Borch and de Hooch is today beyond any doubt.

the early 1680s and the passing away of his widow and his eldest son. Since Kick was above all a genre painter, chapter 2 will be devoted to his genre painting and will concentrate on the guardroom scene, which constitutes more than half of his oeuvre. Chapter 3 will discuss his portraits and history paintings and will be followed by conclusions regarding his iconography, style and chronology.

CHAPTER 1

THE LIFE OF SIMON KICK

Simon Kick was the son of a lacquer worker, Willem Anthonisz. Kick (died 1619), and his second wife Anna de Brey (1562-1626), from Delft.⁴ The couple were living in the Pontermarkt in a house known as *De Blauwe Molen* (The Blue Mill), and it was probably in this house that Kick was born in 1603.

We have no records of his early years in Delft and whether or not he was trained to be a painter there. If he grew up in Delft and left the city only in the early 1620s, he must have known some of the city's leading painters of the period such as Michiel van Miereveld (1566-1641). He must have also been well acquainted with painters of his own generation such as Anthonie Palamedes (1602-1673). According to Weyerman, Simon Kick was also a sculptor,⁵ but we are not familiar with any sculptures by his hand.

Simon Kick is recorded as living in Amsterdam in 1624, at which time he served as a witness to a baptism.⁶ We do not know much about his life in Amsterdam, largely due to the loss of the records of the Amsterdam guild of painters, but we do know that he was married in 1631 in the double wedding mentioned above.

His brother-in-law, Willem Duyster, began painting sometime in the mid-1620s and was doing quite well. He and his wife had a daughter by the name of Anneken, who was born in 1633, but it seems that like her father, she died from the plague two years later. Willem Duyster was buried in the Zuiderkerk in Amsterdam on January 31, 1635; he was only thirty-six-years old.⁷

On June 19, 1635, Simon Kick was authorized to collect from a barber in Fort Orange (modern day Albany, New York) a debt of *f*170 owed to Dirck Cornelisz, Willem Duyster's brother. This seems to suggest that Kick traveled to North America.⁸ It does not make sense that Kick would travel that far only for the sake of collecting this debt, and therefore we can surmise that he had other business that already compelled him to travel.

Simon Kick's fortune was not much better than that of his brother-in-law, for he too died at the relatively tender age of 49 and was buried in Amsterdam on September 26, 1652.⁹

Simon Kick and Christina Duyster had six children, three boys and three girls.¹⁰ The eldest was a son by the name of Cornelis who was trained by his father to be a painter.¹¹ Cornelis Kick (1635-1681) would later develop into a well-known still-life painter.¹² On May 5, 1661, he married Cornelia Spaeroogh from Amsterdam,¹³ but by 1674 he was already a widower and on December 21 that year remarried with Machteltje Dircks de Rechte from Leiden.¹⁴ She died and was buried in

⁴ Davidson 1973, p. 45.

⁵ Weyerman 1729, vol. 2, pp. 337-338.

⁶ On March 3, 1624, Simon Kick was present at the baptism of Johannes, the son of Hans Lemier and Katlyn Kick, in the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam. See Bredius 1915-1922, p. 31 and Hofstede de Groot 1927, p. 254.

⁷ Bredius 1888, p. 193; Lilienfeld 1914, p. 257 and Wurzbach 1906-1910, vol. 1, p. 446.

⁸ Bredius 1888, p. 192 and Bode and Bredius 1889, p. 105.

⁹ Bredius 1915-1922, p. 793 and 31n; Wurzbach 1906-1910, vol. 1, pp. 276-277 and Hofstede de Groot 1927, pp. 254-255.

¹⁰ Davidson 1973, p. 63.

¹¹ Haverkorn van Rijsewijk 1901, p. 64.

¹² For Cornelis Kick, see Houbraken 1718-1721, vol. 2, pp. 333-334; Wurzbach 1906-1910, vol. 1, p. 276; Hofstede de Groot 1927, pp. 253-254 and Wegener, U. B. 2014, "Kick, Cornelis", in *De Gruyter Allgemeines Künstler Lexikon*, Berlin, vol. 8, pp. 200-201.

¹³ De Vries 1885, p. 76 and Wurzbach 1906-1910, vol. 1, p. 276.

¹⁴ De Vries 1885, p. 77; Bredius 1915-1922, p. 792 and Wurzbach 1906-1910, vol. 1, p. 276.

Amsterdam only five years later on December 1, 1679.¹⁵ Records suggest that Cornelis Kick had at least six children, among them twin boys by the names of Johannes and Balthasar, born in 1671 and four other children: Maria, Symon, Harmanus and Willem.

On May 30, 1673, Christina Duyster, widow of Symon Kick, drew her will and left her daughters Annetge, Hendrickge and Catherina most of her movable goods and a total of *f* 1500 in cash. The will states that on an earlier date, at the time of his first marriage, she had already left to her son Cornelis a sum of *f* 500 and a portrait of her late sister Barber Duyster or in place of that, at his choice, a picture of a *kraembewaerstetie* (a laying-in woman), made by her late husband, Simon Kick.¹⁶ She died on December 3, 1680.¹⁷

It is probably the same painting by Simon Kick, *een kraembewaerster* (a laying-in woman) valued at *f* 4, that was recorded as no. 4 in the inventory of the estate of Cornelis Kick, drawn after his death on June 18, 1681.¹⁸ Unfortunately, the paintings in the inventory are not attributed. The inventory also included under no. 6 a painting with soldiers (“Een stuckge van eenige soldaten”) and under no. 8 three old Tronies (“Drie oude tronyen”), which are typical subjects for Simon Kick but not for his son.¹⁹ In other words, it seems that some paintings by Simon Kick were kept by his family at least until the death of his eldest son in 1681. Overall, the estate of Cornelis Kick included only 25 paintings and various other items, and it seems to suggest that he ended his life in rather meager circumstances.

Indeed, it is clear from various sources that Cornelis Kick met with acute financial difficulties: On May 21, 1675, he and his second wife Machteltje Dircks transferred to Johannes Spaeroogh, Kick's brother-in-law from his first marriage (The brother of Cornelia Spaeroogh), all their movable goods, clothing etc. as collateral for the enormous debt of *f* 4,000 for which Johannes and his father (Harmen Spaeroogh) had constituted themselves sureties.²⁰ On June 18, 1681, after his death, his brothers-in-law declared that they would cover his burial costs but not his debts.²¹

¹⁵ Bredius 1915-1922, p. 792.

¹⁶ Bredius 1915-1922, pp. 793-794 and Davidson 1973, p. 63.

¹⁷ Bode and Bredius 1889, p. 105.

¹⁸ He died on May 6, 1681. For the painting, see Montias database no. 1354.

¹⁹ Bredius 1915-1922, pp. 788-790.

²⁰ Bredius 1915-1922, p. 792.

²¹ Bredius 1915-1922, p. 792

CHAPTER 2

THE PAINTINGS OF SIMON KICK

Simon Kick was a painter of figures, and his oeuvre consists of portraits, history paintings and genre themes. This chapter will be devoted to a discussion of his paintings, and since Simon Kick was above all a painter of genre topics, they will serve as its focus. Of the genre topics painted by him, guardroom scenes compose the lion share and accordingly of this chapter too. It includes a discussion on genre topics that Kick returned to on more than one occasion or those that are prevalent in his work. Paintings on topics that appear only once in his known oeuvre will be discussed in the catalogue. This chapter will develop gradually from a discussion of paintings presenting a single figure to paintings with multiple figures.

Tronies

The only group of history paintings by Simon Kick are Tronies. ‘Tronie’ is a Dutch term that nowadays refers to a study in a bust or a half-length of a character that in most cases would be wearing a historicized or otherwise fancy costume. This “character head” may be drawn after a concrete model, but the painting is not intended as a portrait.²² The earliest of these paintings by Kick is *A Scholar in Oriental Costume* dated 1637 (cat. no. 30). The thick-bearded man wearing a turban clearly suggests a historical figure, probably from the Old Testament. The reading from a book suggests a learned man, and therefore this painting may be representing a prophet.²³ The character in Kick’s painting looks very similar to that in a painting by Hendrick Pot depicting *A Reading Old Man* (fig. 1). Here, a man in a fanciful oriental costume is standing and reading from a book. The robe used by Pot is the same robe used by numerous biblical characters in paintings by Rembrandt and his followers.²⁴ In both paintings by Kick and Pot we find an old man, a sort of patriarch, in an oriental costume, reading from a book. The two men even share a similar hooked nose. It is quite clear that both painters are indebted to Rembrandt’s many Tronies of men in oriental clothing.²⁵

²² Adams, A. J. 2016, “The Seventeenth-Century Portrait Comes of Age”, in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Dutch Art of the Seventeenth Century*, edited by W. Franits, Abington, New York, pp. 27-28. In recent years, there has been abundant writing on the Tronie. For the most relevant to our discussion, see De Vries 1989; Schwartz 1989; Hirschfelder 2001; Hirschfelder 2006 and Hirschfelder 2008.

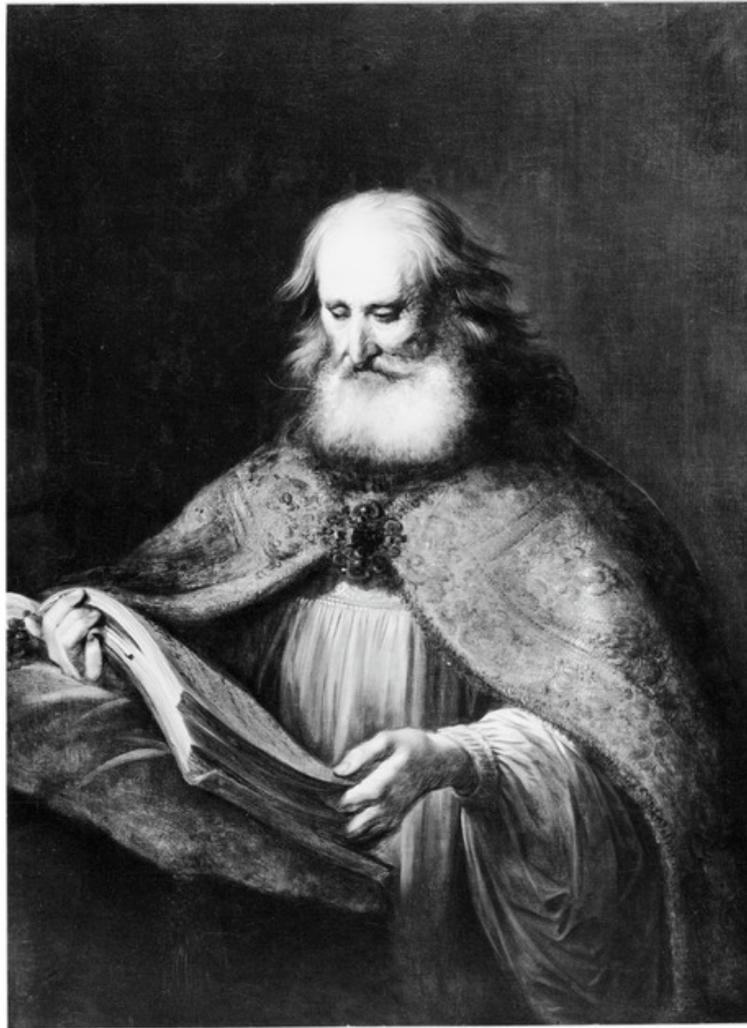
²³ For a similar painting supposedly representing a prophet, see: Salomon Koninck, *Reading Prophet*, o/c, 70.2x60.5 cm, Schloss Mosigkau (Dessau, Sachsen-Anhalt), Museum Schloss Mosigkau, inv. no. 25. For other Tronies with a man reading from a book, see Gerard Dou, *Old Scholar with a Book*, o/p, 24.1x19.7 cm, Henry H. and June Weldon collection, New York, 2015 and Jan Olis, *A Man Reading*, o/p, 81x67 cm, sale, London, Phillips, 14-12-1999, lot 70, as by Karel Dujardin.

²⁴ The robe tied across the chest with a large broach is similar to that worn by Belshazzar in Rembrandt’s famous *Belshazzar’s Feast*, c. 1635, o/c, 167.6x209.2 cm, London, National Gallery. See also Rembrandt, *Half-length Figure of an Old Man in Oriental Clothing*, o/p, 102.8x78.8 cm, private collection (Bredius 179). This type of robe was then repeated by numerous 17th-century Dutch painters.

²⁵ See for example Rembrandt, *Half-length Figure of an Old Man in Oriental Clothing*, c. 1639, o/p, 103x79 cm, private collection, at <https://rkd.nl/explore/images/36208>.



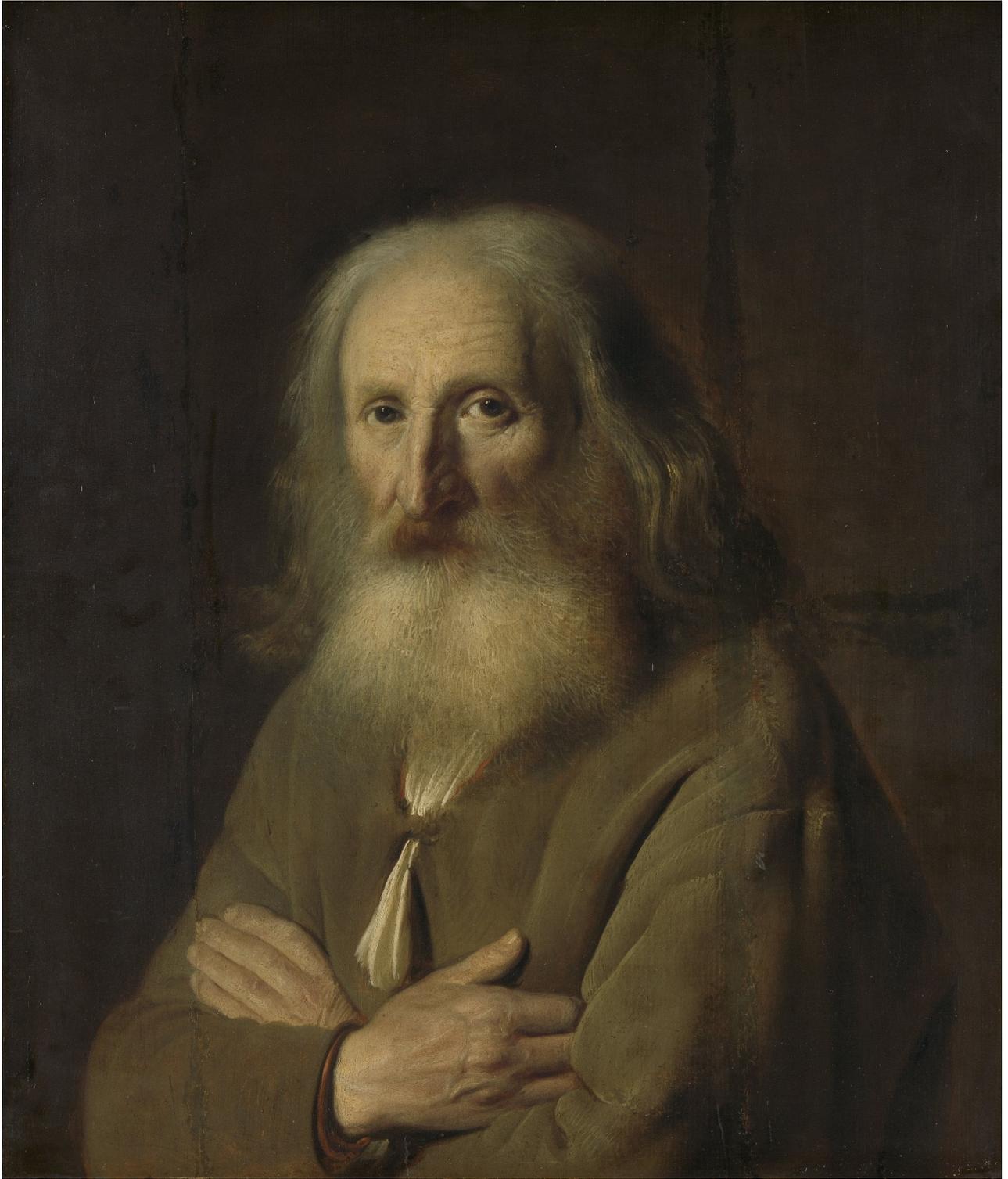
Cat. No. 30



1. Hendrick Pot, *A Reading Old Man*, oil on panel, 120x87.5 cm, whereabouts unknown

It seems that the same model with the hooked nose was used by Kick again in a painting depicting the *Head of an Old Man* (cat. no. 31). This painting, though, is much more ambiguous since without a turban, a book or an oriental costume, it is not clear what this old man is supposed to represent. The unusual gesture he makes by crossing his arms across his chest does not help either. This indeed seems to be a “character head” with no biblical context, and it too has precedents in paintings by Rembrandt, such as the *Bust of an Old Man* from Harvard (fig. 2). Both paintings present an old bearded man with long untidy hair, in a three-quarters angle in a painting done in a brown monochrome tone. The *Head of an Old Man* by Kick also has much in common with a contemporaneous painting by Jan Lievens showing a *Bearded Man with a Beret* (fig. 3).²⁶ Both men have a simple appearance, but neither painting reveals attributes indicating that the man is a biblical figure.

²⁶ See also: Rembrandt, *Bust of an Old Man with a Beard*, o/p, 18.2x17.4 cm, private collection, at <https://rkd.nl/explore/images/287229>. For a similar posture, see: Circle of Salomon Koninck, *Elderly Man with His Hands Across His Chest*, o/p, 63.2x47.6 cm, whereabouts unknown, at <https://rkd.nl/explore/images/203643>.



Cat. No. 31



2. Rembrandt, *Bust of an Old Man*, 1632, oil on panel, 67x51 cm, Cambridge (MA), Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Bequest of Nettie G. Naumburg, inv. no. 1930.191

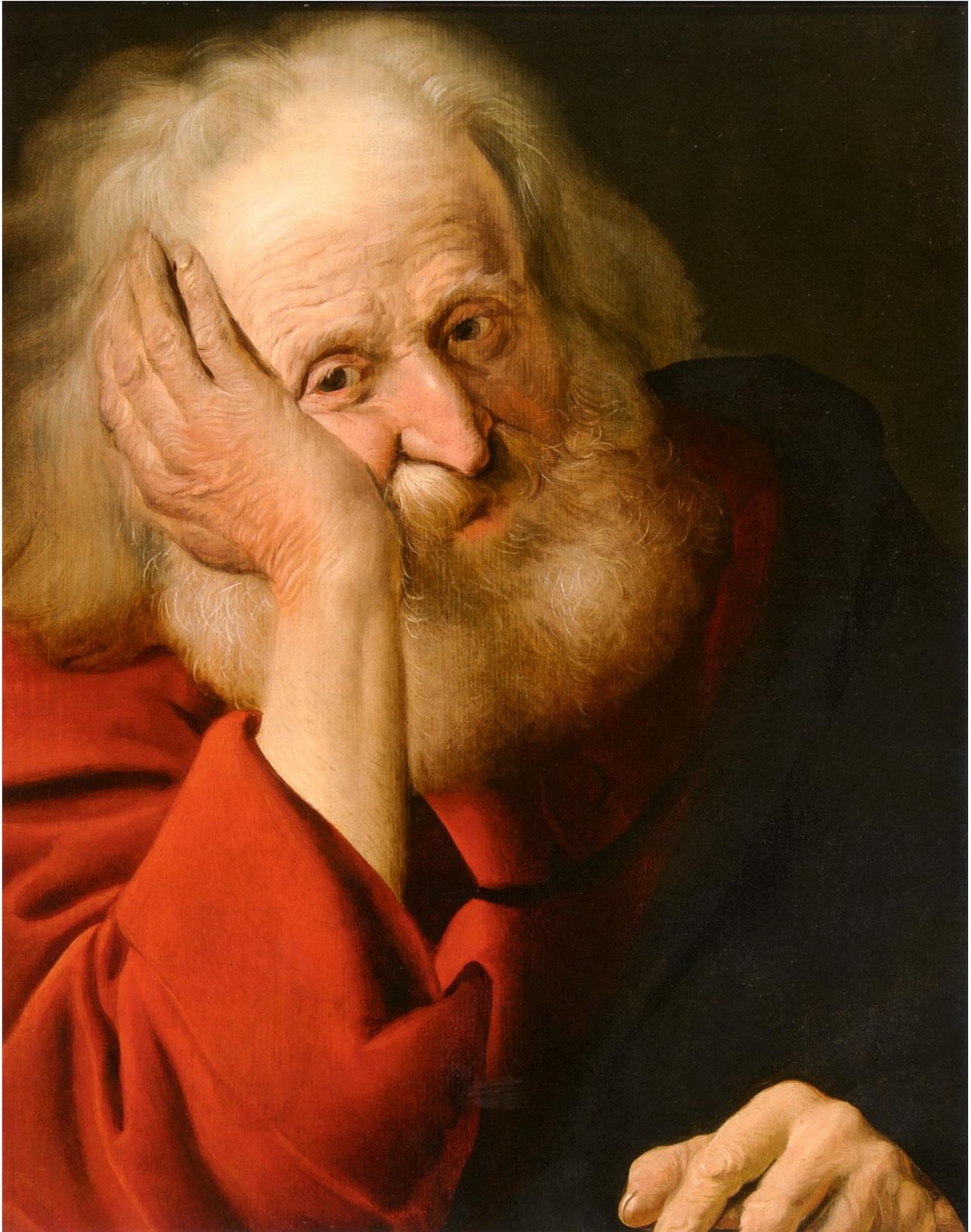


3. Jan Lievens, *Bearded Man with a Beret*, c. 1630, oil on panel, 53.5x46.3 cm, Washington (DC), The National Gallery of Art, Gift of George M. and Linda H. Kaufman, inv. no. 2006.172.1

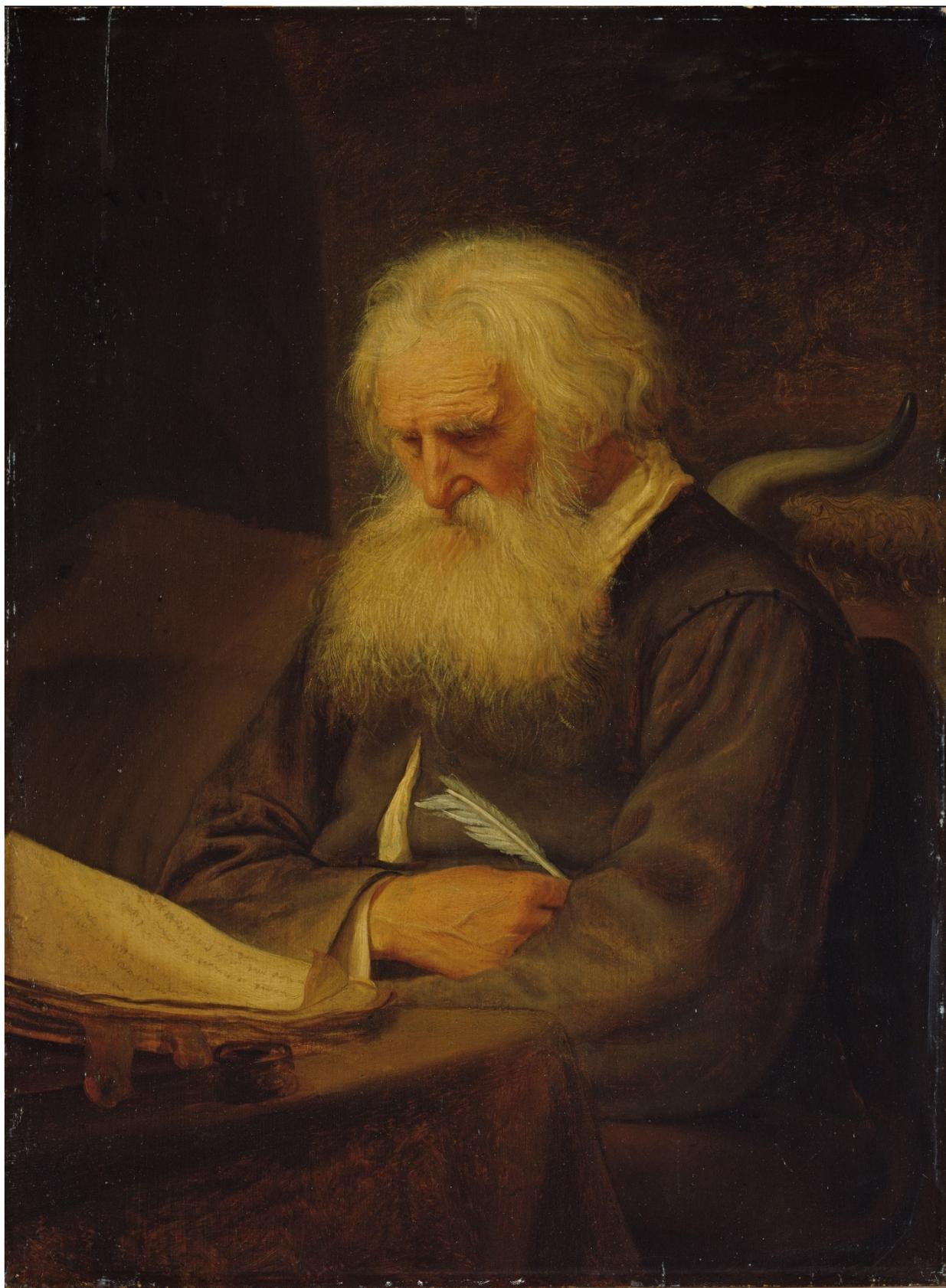
Another *Tronie of an Old Man* by Kick (cat. no. 32) also seems to represent a prophet or an evangelist,²⁷ and yet another painting attributed to Kick with a similar model clearly depicts St. Luke (cat. no. A2). One of the traits typically attributed to the *Tronie* is an extreme facial expression, which would usually associate the model with the lower classes and particularly with the genre of Peasant Life Scenes (*Boerenleven*); however, this trait does not exist in any of the *Tronies* by Simon

²⁷ Compare to a painting attributed to Gerrit Pietersz. Sweelink, *A Prophet*, o/p, 69x54 cm, whereabouts unknown, at <https://rkd.nl/explore/images/63611>, where the sitter presents the same posture but his lower hand rests on an open book.

Kick. Be that as it may, his Tronies stand as a separate and independent group of paintings within his oeuvre since they are neither genre paintings per se nor histories.



Cat. No. 32



Cat. No. A2

A Man Dressing

Simon Kick's oeuvre includes a unique group of paintings depicting a man seated in a room who is either partially clothed or in the process of dressing (cat. nos. 5-7). One of these paintings depicts *A Man Seated in a Room* (cat. no. 5). This man seems to have been caught in the middle of disrobing since he is clearly wearing his undershirt, his boots lie on the floor before him, his feet are already in his slippers and he is wearing a nightcap on his head. His contemplative mood and the arm of a viola-da-gamba seen immediately behind him suggest an intellectual capacity that seems quite odd in this context.



Cat. No. 5

A similar painting by Kick depicts *A Man Seated in a Barn* (cat. no. 6). The setting and the three men seen in the background on the right bring this painting close to Kick's guardroom scenes in a stable, which are discussed below, but the emphasis on the partially clothed man in the foreground and the obvious similarity with cat. numbers 5 and 7 merits a discussion here. This man is smoking a pipe, an activity that also suggest a contemplative mood,²⁸ and just like his counterpart in cat. no. 5, he is looking straight at the viewer.



Cat. No. 6

²⁸ Sluijter 1990, p. 295.

The third painting in this group presents an *Interior with a Man Pulling on his Boot* (cat. no. 7). A drawing in the museum in Copenhagen is thought to be its preparatory sketch (cat. no. D1).²⁹ This painting was attributed in the past to Anthonie Palamedes, supposedly because the motif of a soldier pulling on his boots is a common one in the guardroom scenes by this painter.³⁰ The concept here is slightly different than in cat. nos. 5 and 6, since the man in this painting is clearly caught in the process of dressing. His servant is bending over and taking away the slippers that his master has just taken off. Similar to his counterparts in cat. numbers 5 and 6, he is seated facing the right and gazing directly at the viewer. This painting is a bit different from the preceding two, not only because this man is dressing but also since this particular formula has some equivalents in contemporary Dutch art. The most prominent of these is the *Portrait of Anthony de Bordes (1615-1678) with a Servant* by Michael Sweerts (fig. 4). In this painting, Sweerts portrayed De Bordes having his boot removed by a manservant, but the composition— with a table covered with an oriental rug on the left as well as the outfit and demeanor of both men—is similar. This may suggest that cat. no. 7 is a portrait too, but this assumption cannot be verified at present.



Cat. No. 7

²⁹ Cat. no. 22 includes in the background a soldier pulling on his boot.

³⁰ See for example Anthonie Palamedes, *Guardroom Scene with an Officer Pulling on his Boots*, 1649, o/p, 23.4x31.7 cm, sale, Cologne, Lempertz, 22-5-2004, lot 1114, illustrated; *Guardroom Scene with a Trumpeter Blowing his Trumpet*, c. 1648-1653, o/p, 40.5x63 cm, Dealer Hoogsteder & Hoogsteder, The Hague, 2004; *Guardroom Scene with a Company Making Preparations to March*, o/p, 58x59 cm, Moscow, State Pushkin Museum, inv. no. 1696; *Guardroom Scene with an Officer Pulling on his Boots*, o/p, 22.5x28.5 cm, sale, Vienna, Dorotheum, 30-11-1976, lot 72, illustrated and *Guardroom Scene with an Officer Pulling on his Boots*, o/p, 29x38.3 cm, sale, Amsterdam, Christie's, 9-11-1998, lot 3, illustrated.



4. Michael Sweerts, *Portrait of Anthony de Bordes (1615-1678) with a Servant*, c. 1648, oil on canvas, 50.7x66.6 cm, Washington, National Gallery of Art, inv. no. 2012.13.1

A painting by Quiringh van Brekelenkam of an *Interior with a Man Pulling on His Boot* (fig. 5) depicts a similar occurrence as the one presented in cat. no. 7: A man is seated in a bedroom and pulling on his boot while his other foot is still in a slipper. He is wearing his nightcap, still, while his hat is being held ready by the manservant standing by his side. Here, too, a table covered with an oriental rug is standing on the side, which is a detail known from numerous contemporary paintings depicting women at their toilet (see cat. no. 4).³¹ Indeed, these three paintings depicting a man either pulling on or taking off his boots are very similar in concept to one of the only known contemporary Dutch paintings depicting a man at his toilet by Adriaen van de Venne (fig. 6). Here, too, a man is sitting in his bedroom by a table covered with an oriental rug and accompanied by a servant; however, in this case, the man is busy fixing his hair in front of a mirror. The inclusion of a manservant in these paintings and details such as the sword and spurs are clearly meant to enhance the social status of these men. The three men in Kick's cat. numbers 5-7 bear a striking similarity to the officers depicted in the foreground of cat. nos. 27 and 28. Both are accompanied by a manservant and seen gazing at the viewer while slumped in a chair. Both these paintings, just like cat. no. 6, present a group of men in the background opposite the seated man. These three paintings by Kick (cat. nos. 5-7) constitute a significant portion of the very rare genre subject of presenting a man dressing, and they reveal Kick's interest in the intimate world of men.

³¹ See Rosen 2017, pp. 77-82 and 214-221 for further sources. See also Rosen 2020, pp. 145-150.



5. Quiringh G. van Brekelenkam, *Interior with a Man Pulling on His Boot*, 1663, oil on canvas, 70.5x53.5 cm, whereabouts unknown



6. Adriaen van de Venne, *A Man at his Toilet*, 1631, oil on panel, 40.3x33 cm, whereabouts unknown

In the Company of Men

Kick's interest in the world of men finds further expression in two paintings presenting a musical company of men in an interior (cat. nos. 9-10).³² These two paintings—painted shortly before or after 1650—are an offshoot of a much earlier development in Dutch genre painting.

During the second decade of the 17th century, a group of painters active in Haarlem—including Willem Buytewech (c.1591-1624), Esaias van de Velde (1587-1630) and Dirk Hals (1591-1656)—popularized genre paintings depicting merry social gatherings. These were mostly small paintings depicting gatherings of figures in full length and dressed in contemporary fashion, known

³² See also cat. no. A6.

as a Merry Company (*Vrolijk gezelschap*).³³ In the mid-1620s a new interpretation of the Merry Company, portraying gatherings composed solely of young men, appeared.³⁴ These paintings, such as Dirck Hals' *Group of Men in a Tavern* (fig. 7), differ from the former in the more severe atmosphere of a masculine get-together.³⁵ This painting by Hals shows a group of five men eating, smoking and gambling in an inn while being attended to by the innkeeper. The same interest in a gathering of men is expressed by Jan Olis in a painting depicting *The Visitor* (fig. 8). Here a man is seen entering the room and greeting the others, who are occupied with a game of cards by the fire.³⁶ This development in the view toward the world of men would also lead in the late 1620s to the rise of a new genre formula known as the guardroom scene; Simon Kick would become one of its leading exponents, a development discussed further below.



7. Dirck Hals, *Group of Men in a Tavern*, 1626, oil on panel, 27.5x36 cm, St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, inv. no. 3070

³³ See Kolfin 2005.

³⁴ Kolfin 2005, p. 108.

³⁵ See also Dirck Hals, *Company of Smoking and Drinking Men in an Interior*, 1627, o/p, 34x33 cm, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie.

³⁶ Rosen 2020, pp. 91-95.



8. Jan Olis, *The Visitor*, 1629, oil on panel, 40.7x72 cm, whereabouts unknown

It is interesting to note that around 1650, while Dutch genre painting began focusing more and more on the image of the Dutch woman in the confines of her home,³⁷ Kick instead turned to the painting of companies of merry-making men. The *Merry Company of Men* from Karlsruhe (cat. no. 9) depicts a group of men making music and singing together. The man behind the table is singing from a music book and keeping the beat with his hand. The flute-playing man on the right is slumped in the chair in a posture favored by Kick (see cat. nos. 5, 27 and 28). Another *Merry Company of Men* (cat. no. 10) depicts a similar scene. Here a man is playing the viola-da-gamba while holding a music book in his hand, with a comrade playing a flute in the back. Both are painted on a vertical rectangle format and both reveal an unbalanced composition, with the company located on one side of the composition while the other is left vacant.

³⁷ See Franits 1993.



Cat. No. 9

The Return from the Hunt (cat. no. 11), painted around 1648, reveals a different type of male gathering, as it depicts a group of men resting in an interior after a hunt. A man is standing in the right foreground by the fireplace and looking at the viewer; he supports a rifle in one hand and holds a jug in the other. The rest of the company, as executed by Kick in some of the paintings discussed above, are located on the opposite side and in the back. One of them is seated smoking while another presents a dead heron he holds by its legs. The latter is clearly based on Rembrandt's famous *Self Portrait with a Bittern* of 1639 (fig. 9).³⁸ On a table covered with an oriental rug lies a dead duck, and a hunting dog sprawls on the floor. At first glance, this painting seems to belong to the elaborate Netherlandish pictorial tradition of *The Hunter's Gift*. In this tradition, a hunter or several hunters are seen offering dead fowl to women as an invitation for sex.³⁹ A painting by Gerard Donck showing *Hunters Resting in a Barn* (fig. 10) reveals many affinities with the painting by Kick. Here, too, a group of men is resting in an interior after a hunt. In both paintings a dead duck is presented in the middle, but in Donck's painting a man and a woman are pointing at it, thus emphasizing its inherent sexual potential. In other words, *The Return from the Hunt* by Simon Kick (cat. no. 11) is

³⁸ Bode and Bredius 1889, p. 107.

³⁹ See Jongh, E. de, 2000, "A bird's-eye view of erotica. Double entendre in a series of seventeenth-century genre scenes", in *Questions of Meaning: Theme and Motif in Dutch Seventeenth-Century Painting*, Leiden, pp. 21-58. For the subject of "The Return from the Hunt" in particular, see Pieter Codde, *Return of the Hunters*, 1633, o/p, 54x68 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-S-4844 and Anonymous 17th-century Dutch Master, *The Return of the Hunters*, o/p, 48x60 cm, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. no. 5960.

the only genre painting known to us to depict a group of hunters in an interior without women present and without dead fowls used as sexual references.



Cat. No. 10



Cat. No. 11



9. Rembrandt, *Self Portrait with a Bittern*, 1639, oil on panel, 120.7x88.3 cm, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, inv. no. 1561.