



REMBRANDT'S MASTER PUPILS

FERDINAND

Bol and

GOVERT

Flinck

 BOOKS THE REMBRANDT HOUSE MUSEUM AND AMSTERDAM MUSEUM



Ferdinand Bol, *Self-Portrait Leaning on a Balustrade*, c. 1647. Canvas, 93 x 83.5 cm.
Private collection USA



Govert Flinck, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1640. Panel, 59 x 47 cm.
Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud (loan private collection)

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Foreword

At the end of the seventeenth century, the very idea of travelling from Amsterdam to Lucca in Italy – and back – in twenty-four hours would have been beyond Anna Maria van Diemen's wildest dreams. She took a great deal longer than that when she finally left Amsterdam, where she had been born, for a new life in Italy. She travelled with her husband, Jeronimo Parensi, and her baggage probably contained the painting of *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, a colossal canvas by the young and ambitious Ferdinand Bol, painted in the style of his great teacher, Rembrandt.

Three hundred and fifty years later, we, the directors of the Rembrandt House Museum and the Amsterdam Museum, made the same journey, following in Anna Maria's footsteps. In twenty-four hours, we travelled to Lucca and back again, with the burning desire to bring the monumental masterpiece – now in the collection of the Museo Nazionale di Palazzo Mansi – home to Amsterdam for a little while. In Lucca, the present Marquis of Mansi was expecting us. Thanks largely to his enthusiasm and diplomacy, *The Sacrifice of Isaac* can be seen in all its glory in Amsterdam for the first time since the seventeenth century in the double exhibition *Ferdinand Bol and Govert Flinck: Rembrandt's Master Pupils* in the autumn of 2017.

This was just one of the many adventures that enlivened this special joint venture between the Rembrandt House Museum and the Amsterdam Museum. Our close and most enjoyable collaboration on this project was the outcome of a shared and long-cherished wish to honour the contemporaries Govert Flinck (1615-1660) and Ferdinand Bol (1616-1680) with a double exhibition and publication. And now, at last, we have achieved it.

As well as objects from our own collections, the double exhibition showcases many loans from museums and private collections in the Netherlands and abroad. The enthusiastic cooperation of the lenders is evident from the considerable number of paintings that have been restored especially for this occasion. Other works were completely unknown until recently, and they can now be added to the artists' oeuvres. Special thanks go to our colleagues at the Rijksmuseum; their extraordinary generosity in granting us the loans we requested was praiseworthy.

This ambitious and expensive exhibition would not have been possible without the great support of funds and sponsors. The substantial contributions from the international art trade and from various private collections also far exceeded our expectations. Roberto Payer, General Manager of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel and the Hilton Hotel in Amsterdam, played a facilitating role behind the scenes in acquiring the loan from Lucca. On behalf of both museums we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who supported our project with such generosity.



FERDINAND BOL *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, 1646. Oil on canvas, 268 x 213 cm. Lucca, Museo Nazionale di Palazzo Mansi, inv.no. 1885.24

A project like this cannot succeed without the enthusiastic and untiring efforts of many people, inside and outside our museums. For her pivotal contribution to the exhibition we would like to thank Tatyana van Walsum who, assisted by Stijn van Kervel and Johan Wiericx, came up with the superb exhibition design. Theatre-maker Jörgen Tjon A Fong created a broader topical context for this Golden Age exhibition.

Jolande Roest tackled the complicated loan administration and logistics of the exhibition with tireless energy, and Crown Fine Art looked transported the art. Aon Artscope arranged the insurance and the Dutch government supported our project with an indemnity guarantee.

Sander Rutjens of the Amsterdam Museum acted as project manager, complemented by the Rembrandt House's Hester Huitema. The team consisted of curators Leonore van Sloten from the Rembrandt House Museum and Norbert Middelkoop from the Amsterdam Museum, assisted by their colleagues David de Witt and Tom van der Molen. We greatly appreciate the efforts they devoted to this project.

This splendid book is a reflection of the in-depth knowledge and immense pleasure of the compilers and authors, all specialists in Flinck and Bol. Norbert Middelkoop was responsible for the editing; the excellent translation was provided by Lynne Richards and Philip Clarke. Johan de Bruijn from wbooks supervised the publication and Marinka Reuten created the stylish design, assisted by Tjeerd Dam.

It is not surprising that good cooperation and love of art are the recipe for so much beauty, and for us this project is conclusive proof. That Ferdinand Bol and Govert Flinck, moulded by their great teacher Rembrandt, would reach the pinnacle of their fame again after three and a half centuries is the ultimate gift to us.

Lidewij de Koekkoek
Director, The Rembrandt House Museum

Judikje Kiers
Director, Amsterdam Museum

FERDINAND BOL see figure 59



GOVERT FLINCK see figure 33



Introduction

One might well wonder why the Rembrandt House Museum and the Amsterdam Museum have devoted a double exhibition and a book to Govert Flinck and Ferdinand Bol, two of the most important Dutch artists produced by the Golden Age. To answer this question, we must go back in time.

Something over four hundred years ago, Govert Flinck (1615-1660) was born in Cleves and Ferdinand Bol (1616-1680) was born in Dordrecht – they were contemporaries. After their initial schooling as painters, the two talented artists moved to Amsterdam around the age of twenty, where they finished their training under Rembrandt, who at that time was at the height of his fame. Even though Flinck and Bol soon ranked alongside the most successful painters in Amsterdam, and even surpassed Rembrandt in that regard, they remained in their famous teacher's shadow in the centuries that followed. And all that time, western museums were full of their best paintings.

In 1669, the year of Rembrandt's death, Bol stopped painting and Flinck had been dead for a decade. During the eighteenth century, Rembrandt was embraced by artists as the 'true artist', the prototype of the idiosyncratic, misunderstood genius who would not be swayed by the tastes of the time. Art collectors, too, increasingly began to appreciate the qualities of Rembrandt's paintings, prints and drawings – among which a great deal of work by pupils and followers was still included at that time. After Rembrandt's election as the hero of the Netherlands in the mid-nineteenth century at the time of Belgium's separation, his fame rose to mythical proportions.

The establishment and opening of several international museums in the decades prior to 1900 fuelled interest in research into Rembrandt's oeuvre. It was important to distinguish the work of the 'Rembrandt School' from that of the master himself in order to understand the 'genius' that was Rembrandt. In that context, the many students Rembrandt had trained were inevitably downgraded to the status of less important artists. The fact that most of them had turned away from their former teacher's style over time was seen as betrayal. Scarcely any attention was paid to the individual qualities of their work, let alone the success they had enjoyed in their own time. This was also the fate of Govert Flinck and Ferdinand Bol.

It was 1965 before Joachim Wolfgang von Moltke published an oeuvre catalogue of Govert Flinck's paintings. In 1976, the Dutch art historian Albert Blankert obtained his doctorate with a monumental study of Ferdinand Bol's life and paintings; his book about the painter published in 1982 is still the authoritative work. By then Werner Sumowski had embarked on the publication of the impressive series *Drawings of the Rembrandt School*, which from 1983 onwards was followed by the publication of *Gemälde der Rembrandtschüler* in several parts. Peter Schatborn, Martin Royalton-Kisch and Holm Bevers also did ground-breaking work on Rembrandt School drawings.

Continuing interest in the nineteen-nineties resulted in memorable museum exhibitions about both Rembrandt and his pupils: in 1991-92 the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam staged

Rembrandt: The Master and his Workshop, an exhibition that also went to Berlin and London, and in 1997- 98 Rembrandt: A Genius and his Impact was put on in Australia. Monographic exhibitions were also devoted to former Rembrandt pupils, in particular Carel Fabritius, Gerrit Dou and Arent de Gelder. Over the years the Rembrandt House Museum has organized several exhibitions about the Rembrandt School, and Govert Flinck has to date been honoured with an exhibition in his birthplace of Cleves on two occasions, in 1965 and in 2015-16. If anything has become apparent from all these initiatives, it is the fact that many artists in Rembrandt's sphere of influence should be judged on their own merits, above all because they produced superb work of international stature. Entirely in keeping with this vision, an international conference, Govert Flinck and Ferdinand Bol: Rising Stars in Rembrandt's Amsterdam was staged at Herstmonceux Castle, East Sussex (UK) in July 2015, as a welcome prelude to the present exhibition and to at least two publications, including this book for enthusiasts.

Four hundred years after their birth, it is high time to honour Govert Flinck and Ferdinand Bol in Amsterdam, all the more so as they are two of Rembrandt's most famous pupils. The Rembrandt House Museum and the Amsterdam Museum came together to produce a major double exhibition and this book, in which the two artists are portrayed and compared. As the concept was developed, the project naturally divided into two strands. In the Rembrandt House, the focus is on what the two artists learned from the master and how they developed in their first independent years. Rembrandt's former home, with the pupils' studio where Bol must have worked for about a year, provides a unique historical context for this aspect. The later careers and successes of Flinck and Bol are showcased in the continuation of the exhibition in the Amsterdam Museum, which is housed in another iconic seventeenth-century building, the Burgerweeshuis complex that formerly housed the municipal orphanage.

The reasons behind the museums' collaboration were not just practical – the arguments in favour of portraying the two men together were the decisive factor. The concept, the brain-child of the former Chief Curator of the Rembrandt House, Bob van den Boogert, presented an irresistible opportunity to compare the lives and careers of Flinck and Bol. At first sight, there are countless parallels in their careers. Both had a first teacher outside Amsterdam and both opted to complete their training with Rembrandt. As advanced students, they took part in the production process in the workshop and in so doing mastered Rembrandt's style. After they had set themselves up as artists in their own right, Flinck and Bol still worked in Rembrandt's style for some years, before adopting a different, more classicist approach. Both oeuvres are dominated by history paintings, frequently very large, and elegant portraits of prominent contemporaries.

Aside from similarities, however, there are also unmistakable differences. Govert Flinck and Ferdinand Bol did not study under Rembrandt at the same time, one followed soon after the other. Flinck, like Rembrandt, headed the workshop of the art dealer Hendrick Uylenburgh and only worked under Rembrandt for twelve to eighteen months. Rembrandt started his own workshop in 1635 and Bol joined him in 1636. Bol spent around four years with Rembrandt, so Rembrandt's influence on him was stronger and lasted longer. Soon after Flinck left Rembrandt

he emerged as a true virtuoso, who worked in different painting styles, depending on the commission. Bol stuck to what Rembrandt had taught him for longer and did not develop a brighter palette and a smoother style until around 1650. Bol, moreover, was the only one of Rembrandt's pupils to produce a substantial graphic oeuvre, amounting to twenty or so skilfully etched prints.

Once they were independent, Flinck and Bol became important players in the Amsterdam art market. Their networks of clients were crucial. Aided by family connections, each built up his own clientele. But beyond these circles they also succeeded in landing prestigious commissions from private individuals and civic institutions, ranging from the Arquebusiers' civic guard headquarters and the Leper Hospital to the Admiralty and the Town Hall. Both artists also won important commissions outside Amsterdam. Flinck, for example, worked for Amalia of Solms in The Hague and for the Elector of Brandenburg, and Bol, among other things, made a group portrait of the Gouda civic guard and painted decorations several metres high for a house in Utrecht.

As we have seen, both painters excelled above all in history scenes and portraits – a further invitation to look at their accomplishments in these areas side by side and to compare them. It gives art lovers an opportunity to see their masterpieces in a context that naturally emphasizes their individual qualities. Every reason, in other words, for a double exhibition about Govert Flinck and Ferdinand Bol in the Rembrandt House Museum and the Amsterdam Museum, with a book that will keep the memory of this special encounter alive.

This book chronicles the latest insights into Govert Flinck and Ferdinand Bol, in longer essays and focus contributions on individual themes. We would like to thank the authors, all specialists in their fields, for their enthusiastic collaboration on this project. Our sincere thanks also go to all the curators, art dealers, collectors and their advisors who have helped us in the past few years, above all in the acquisition of countless loans. CODART, the network of curators who specialize in Dutch and Flemish art, once again proved essential. And finally, our close colleagues, David de Witt of the Rembrandt House Museum and Tom van der Molen of the Amsterdam Museum, deserve special mention. Their individual contributions and expertise were a vital source of inspiration for us and broadened the basis for the exhibition and the book considerably. It was a great pleasure to work with everyone involved, not least all our other colleagues at our two museums, in bringing this special project to fruition.

Leonore van Sloten
The Rembrandt House Museum

Norbert E. Middelkoop
Amsterdam Museum



Govert Flinck Learns to Paint Like Rembrandt

DAVID DE WITT

Rembrandt's star was still rising rapidly in 1634, when a young painter called Govert Flinck joined his workshop to study under him. By that time, Rembrandt had achieved pre-eminence among his fellow artists in various aspects of art, including composition and modelling, expressing emotions, modelling of form and rendering different surfaces and textures. His gift for capturing sitters and their dress with astonishing realism, not infrequently conveying a sense of the moment that accentuated human presence, saw him dominate the portrait market. Rembrandt won commissions from private individuals, from the court and from civic institutions. For the young Flinck, recently arrived in Amsterdam, the new centre of painting, he must have been an inspiring role model.

Rembrandt's new assistant was already considerably advanced, as he had completed his training in Leeuwarden under the history painter Lambert Jacobsz (c. 1598-1636). It was not unusual for a promising young painter to move on to a prominent artist for further study. Rembrandt himself had studied with Pieter Lastman (1583-1633). In his biography of Govert Flinck, Arnold Houbraken (1660-1719) was quite specific about Flinck's motives for going to Rembrandt – to adapt his style to the latest fashion. Rembrandt's style at that time was 'praised by all ... so that everything had to be done in this manner if it were to please the world'³ Copying or adapting his teacher's existing works was an important part of Flinck's final training: he had to be able to master Rembrandt's chiaroscuro effects, his use of colour and his handling of surface and texture. Composition and conveying human emotions were evidently not part of this syllabus. During the relatively short time that Flinck worked with Rembrandt, he contributed to a number of his teacher's paintings. Afterwards, he continued to apply and expand the expert knowledge he had acquired from Rembrandt for at least five years.

3 (cat.no. 3). GOVERT FLINCK *Christ and the Samaritan Woman*, c. 1634. Oil on canvas, 109.9 x 85.1 cm. Kingston (Ontario), Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Gift of Alfred and Isabel Bader, inv. no. 57-001.11

Tronies in the Work of Govert Flinck and Ferdinand Bol

FRANZISKA GOTTWALD

61 (cat.no. 7). GOVERT FLINCK *Young Man with a Gorget*, 1636.
Oil on canvas, 66 x 53 cm. Private collection



62 (cat.no. 57). FERDINAND BOL *A Man in a Fancy Robe and a Tall Cap Strung with Pearls*, c. 1643. Oil on canvas, 87 x 78.1 cm. Kingston, Ontario, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, gift of Alfred and Isabel Bader, 2014, acc. no. 57-004



The *tronie* was a significant genre in the oeuvres of both Ferdinand Bol and Govert Flinck.¹ The Dutch word *tronie* may refer to 'head', 'face' or 'expression', but these works are neither portraits nor history paintings. In inventories dating from as early as the seventeenth century we find paintings listed as *tronies* that were probably of a human face or bust but cannot be described as a formal portrait (*conterfeytsel*).² A *tronie* is an artistic exercise that is not always straightforward to interpret. *Tronies*, like portraits, were painted from life – 'naer het leven' – in other words from models, and the subjects are presented in a similar way.³ Unlike the portrait, however, the *tronie* is concerned above all with expressing painterliness. The models are usually dressed in exotic or historicizing costumes and consequently call to mind the figures in history paintings, or *portraits historiés*.

They are often the faces of old people, whose creased and wrinkled skin – like the various textures of costumes – presented the painter with a challenge. The sitters, moreover, are frequently shown in the sort of dramatic lighting that is not generally found in portraits but is a feature of history paintings. *Tronies*, therefore, can be seen first and foremost as the expression of specific meanings – for instance as an allusion to youth or old age, wisdom or grief, faith or mortality.⁴ In view of its informal character, the *tronie* at the same time gives the painter an opportunity to paint in a broader or sketchier manner and thus demonstrate his own mastery. *Tronies* also served as examples that were copied or imitated by pupils in workshops – a common practice in Rembrandt's workshop, too.⁵ Govert Flinck's *Man with a Gorget* (fig. 61) and Ferdinand Bol's *Man in a Fancy Robe* (fig. 62) – are

63. REMBRANDT *Self-Portrait with a Gorget*, c. 1629, panel, 38.2 x 31 cm, Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, inv. no. GM 391



64. GOVERT FLINCK *Old Man Leaning on a Balustrade*, 1651. Canvas, 99,5 x 84 cm, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Gemäldegalerie, inv. no. 380





Govert Flinck, Ferdinand Bol and Their Networks of Influential Clients

ERNA E. KOK

In the seventeenth century, networking was the most effective way of achieving success and standing. Govert Flinck and Ferdinand Bol combined their artistic skills with clever networking so that, throughout their careers, prestigious commissions came their way from wealthy merchants and influential governors in Amsterdam.

Highlights: Flinck and Bol

Govert Flinck undoubtedly experienced the pinnacle of his career at the end of 1659, when he was awarded a huge commission for paintings from the burgomasters Cornelis de Graeff (1599-1664), Joan Huydecoper (1599-1661), Simon van Hoorn (1618-1667) and Hendrick Spiegel (1606-1646). He was to supply twelve enormous oil paintings for the prestigious new town hall in Dam Square: four famous heroes of Antiquity and a cycle of eight on the subject of the uprising of the Batavians against the Romans (fig. 68). The burgomasters wanted to present the story in the town hall as a forerunner of the Revolt of the Dutch Republic against the Spanish. Flinck was to deliver two paintings a year for six consecutive years at the top rate of a thousand guilders each, guaranteeing him a substantial income for the next six years. The prominent men who commissioned Flinck could have chosen any of a number of history painters to undertake the project, yet the lucrative commission went to one man. Flinck was a celebrated artist and enjoyed the support of the burgomasters because he had spent the previous years carefully constructing and maintaining his network. What should have been the crowning achievement of Flinck's successful career was cut off abruptly within two months by his sudden death in early 1660 at the age of forty-five. All that we have of the town hall commission are a few sketches (p. 200, figs. 278 and 279).¹

67. FERDINAND BOL *Self-Portrait with Cupid*, c. 1669. Oil on canvas, 128 x 104 cm.
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-A-42

This book accompanies the exhibition *Ferdinand Bol and Govert Flinck. Rembrandt's master pupils*, held at The Rembrandt House Museum and the Amsterdam Museum, 13 October 2017 to 18 February 2018.

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THE REMBRANDT HOUSE MUSEUM, AMSTERDAM

Between 1639 and 1658, Rembrandt lived and worked in this magnificent house, which is now a museum. An inventory drawn up in that period was used as the source for restoring the house with seventeenth-century furniture, art and objects. The Rembrandt House stages daily demonstrations of etching and paint-making, showing how the artist worked. The museum holds almost the complete collection of Rembrandt's etchings, and mounts temporary exhibitions of the work of Rembrandt, his contemporaries and later artists in the modern museum wing.

THE AMSTERDAM MUSEUM

The Amsterdam Museum brings the history of the city to life through four core values – enterprise, imagination, creativity and citizenship – and links past and present. The museum sees it as its social task to open up the story of Amsterdam to as broad a cross-section of the public as possible. The Amsterdam Museum holds the City of Amsterdam's extraordinarily rich collection of art and historical artefacts, which it presents in permanent and temporary exhibitions.

Something over four hundred years ago, Govert Flinck (1615-1660) was born in Cleves and Ferdinand Bol (1616-1680) was born in Dordrecht – they were contemporaries. After their initial schooling as painters, when they were about twenty, the two talented artists moved to Amsterdam, where they finished their training under Rembrandt, who at that time was at the height of his fame. Even though Flinck and Bol soon ranked alongside the most successful painters in Amsterdam, and even surpassed Rembrandt in that regard, they remained in their famous teacher's shadow in the centuries that followed. To honour Govert Flinck and Ferdinand Bol, the Rembrandt House Museum and the Amsterdam Museum came together to produce a major double exhibition and this book, in which the two artists are portrayed and compared.

As advanced students, they took part in the production process in the workshop and in so doing mastered Rembrandt's style. After they had set themselves up as artists in their own right, Flinck and Bol still worked in Rembrandt's style for some years, before adopting a different, more classicist approach. Flinck emerged as a true virtuoso who worked in different painting styles, depending on the commission. Bol stuck to what Rembrandt had taught him for longer and did not develop a brighter palette and a smoother style until around 1650. Bol, moreover, was the only one of Rembrandt's pupils to produce a substantial graphic oeuvre, amounting to twenty or so skilfully etched prints.

This book chronicles the latest insights into Govert Flinck and Ferdinand Bol, in longer essays and focus contributions on individual themes that present a fascinating insight into their life and work: from their training with Rembrandt to their great successes as independent artists excelling at large history paintings and elegant portraits. The essays explore their exceptional artistic talent and examine the family connections and social networks that were crucial to their success. Bol and Flinck were awarded prestigious commissions – from private individuals and rulers, and from city institutions including the civic guard and the town hall. Fifteen paintings by Bol and Flinck were restored especially for the exhibition. Words and images combine to make this book a valuable addition to art-lovers' libraries.

