

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)[View this email in your browser](#)

Galería de Arte

Soraya Cartategui

Dear friends,

This month we present this magnificent portrait of Joseph Coymans by F. Jacob van der Merck, an important Dutch painter of portraits and genre painting.

Best wishes,
Soraya Cartategui

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)**F. Jacob van der Merck**

(Gravendeel 1610 – Leiden 1664)

*"Portrait of Joseph Coymans (1591-1670s), with coat of arms, Atatis 50,
dated in 1641"*

Oil on canvas

70,8 x 54,3 cm. (27,87 x 21,37 in.)

Signed with the monogram JVM

F. Jacob van der Merck began his career in 1631 when he entered in the Guild of St. Luke in the city of Delf but later, in 1636, he was also a member of the Guild of St.

have always been highly appreciated but especially his life-size portraits are great admired. The protagonists of his portraits are always presented with great dignity, greatness and good perspective. His mastery gave him the opportunity to paint important personalities of his contemporary society such as the magnificent portrait he made of Frederick Henry of Orange. Throughout his career he also collaborated with other important artists such as the great landscape painter Jan van Goyen, who was in The Hague around 1650 and who executed the background landscape of an important family portrait executed by J. van der Merck. The portrait was a very booming topic during the Golden Age in Netherlands, especially in Delf area. This type of works were very demanded especially by the merchant class, as is the case of the protagonist of our painting, and for this reason we will find portraits made by all kinds of artists, both first class and second or third. The price of these paints not only varied depending on the technical quality of the artist who did it, but also influenced the amount of body that was represented in the painting. In this way, the paintings where it was represented only to the chest area were cheaper than those in which it came up to half body with the hands, and these in turn were more affordable than those of the whole body and no longer speak of the group portraits, representations that were very demanded mainly by the civic associations like the militias or the Guilds.

In spite of being a great portraitist, different genre scenes and interiors are also attributed to him, although these are done in a completely different style from his portraits. The colors used in these genre compositions are colder, in ochre and brown tones, which give life to scenes of soldiers resting in a weapons room or elegant characters chatting animatedly in beautiful salons, among other topics. This tonal difference between their various compositions has caused that, sometimes, it has been questioned that they have been painted by the same hand as the bright and lively portraits. Even so, this type of work reminds us in style to other artists such as A. Palamedesz, P. Codde and P. Quast. F. Jacob van der Merck will also make elegant still lifes such as the painting of grapes with peaches in a basket at the Lakenthal Museum in the city of Leiden.

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)

Going on to the work that occupies us this month, we are in front of a portrait of the important and prominent merchant Joseph Coymans (1591 - 1670s) who gathered a great fortune throughout his life. Born in Hamburg, he was the son of Johannes Sr. and brother of Balthasar and Johannes Coymans. His two brothers, very wealthy businessmen, lived in Amsterdam and that they sponsored the construction of The Canal House, designed by the architect Jacob van Campen.

In 1616 the portrayed Joseph Coymans would marry Dorothea Berck, daughter of a rich wine commercial from the city of Dordrecht, with whom he had five children who in turn married with very wealthy people from the society of Haarlem and Amsterdam. We know that already in 1632 Joseph lived with his family in a mansion on Smedestraat Street rented by Anna Vogel, wife of Albert Dirckz Bas, and that was located in the neighborhood where the wealthiest elite lived in the city.

Thanks to his high social status, Joseph Coymans and his wife developed a great sensitivity for art, and in fact they possessed a large collection of art works. Also for this reason they would be portrayed in different stages of their lives by artists of great importance such as Frans Hals, who would paint the marriage in 1644, or Govert Flinck who did it in 1647.

In this painting appears Joseph Coymans posing at three-quarter, looking to the right, which allows van der Merck to develop a whole game of light and shadows with the help of the daylight that comes from the left side of the composition. Also, we can find several spotlights illuminated throughout the picture as is the face of Coymans, his hand and of course the white suit collar that also stands out for its simplicity and elegance, contrasting with the sobriety of the rest of the clothes made in brown tones.

The face of Coymans also attracts attention because it is made with great delicacy. In him we can appreciate the firm and deep look of the character portrayed, framed by fine eyebrows and a

[Subscribe](#)
[Past Issues](#)

achieve the prestige and fortune he deserved. It is surprising how Merck manages to perfectly define Coymans' nose simply with several highlights placed strategically along his nasal septum.



We can even distinguish the rosy cheekbones characteristic of the population of this area of Europe because of the cold; a light pink tone that melts and integrates perfectly with the rest of the picture. At the same time, if we look at the hair, the mustache and the beard, we can appreciate the skill of the artist again. The hair seems to be made one by one, and we can even distinguish the first gray hair of the merchant that can be glimpsed among the rest of the dark hair. The same happens with the mustache and the beard although in this case they present a color somewhat lighter than that of the hair, something very common in some men, and that could be indicating the color of hair that he would have when he was younger.

It is also very interesting the detail of showing his left hand holding the cord that falls from the suit collar and ending in a tassel in the shape of a cross. Through the way in which hands are made we can distinguished a great artist, and in this case we can appreciate the skill with which Coymans' hand is painted. Merck has helped by the lights and shadows to bring volume and with slight touches of color has been configuring the knuckles, placing the hand in a very natural position. The sobriety of his suit in brown tones is interrupted by the detail of the seams of the suit decorated with motifs in gold similar to the central line of buttons. Thanks to the clothing of the character represented and its folds we can appreciate again the quality of F. Jacob van der Merck's paintings.

Despite the simplicity and sobriety of Joseph Coymans' clothing, our artist has managed to convey the greatness of the personality, which is indicating that he has completely captured the psychology of the represented, one of the most important aspects of this type of paintings.



The moderation of his attire is complemented by two small jewels that almost go unnoticed for their simplicity. The first one is found hanging from the knot of the cord, it is a small gold pendant in the shape of a tear with what seems to be a small stone inside. The second

[Subscribe](#)
[Past Issues](#)

At the bottom of the composition, on the right, appears the coat of arms of the prosperous Coymans family of Haarlem. On a field of gold are represented three heads of black cows that are making reference to the meaning of the family name that translates as "man of the cow".



This coat of arms can be found in different portraits of the family, which allows us to identify the origin of the represented, although sometimes we also have an inscription that tells us their identity. An example can be found in a portrait made by Frans Hals to Willem Coymans in 1645 that is in the National Gallery of Art in the United States. Just above the coat of arms we can see an inscription in which appears "Atatis 50", referring to the age in which F. Jacob van der Merck portrayed Joseph Coymans. We also find the date on which the painting was made, 1641, in addition to the anagram of the artist JVM that is very similar to the one that appears in a portrait of Coymans' wife. In fact, this series of indicators and the quality of the painting, allowed Professor Sander Paarlberg, curator of ancient art at the Dordrechts Museum, to determine the authorship of this portrait.



Finally, we would like to put the spotlight on the great technical and artistic quality of Jacob van der Merck that manages to endow the painting with perspective and depth by just helping with the posture of the character, the light and the coat of arms hanging on the back wall despite the monochromatic background.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- W. Bernt "The Netherlandish Painters of the Seventeenth Century" 1969. Vol. II, pag. 77, plates 746, 747, 748
- J. T. Renckens, "Oud Holland", LXIX, 1954, p. 246
- All the Paintings of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, "A Completely illustrated catalogue", pag. 376
- Christopher Wright, "Dutch Painting in the Seventeenth Century Images of a Golden Age in British Collections", pag.217
- E. Benezit "Dictionnaire des Peintres..." Vol. 9 pag. 501 –502

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)

Soraya Cartategui Fine Art Gallery, Madrid, Spain.

EXHIBITIONS

Soraya Cartategui Fine Art Gallery, Feriarte (Madrid, Spain), November 2017

MUSEUMS

Merck's works can be found in Museums of the following cities: Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum; Berlin, Ancient Museum; Haarlem, Frans Hals; The Hague, Royal Gallery; Kiev, National Museum of Art; Leiden, Ancient Art Museum; Oldenbourg, Horst-Janssen Museum; Rotterdam, Kinsthal Art Museum; Utrecht, Central Museum.

Copyright © 2018 Soraya Cartategui Gallery. All rights reserved.

[unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

The MailChimp logo is displayed in a white, cursive font on a dark grey rectangular background.